Pathways to Equity: An Auto-Ethnographic and Narrative Study of Teacher Educator and Preservice Teachers in a One-Credit Course and Community-Based Field Experience

Lisa Reid
University of South Carolina

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact SCHOLARC@mailbox.sc.edu.
PATHWAYS TO EQUITY: AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC AND NARRATIVE STUDY OF A TEACHER EDUCATOR AND PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN A ONE-CREDIT COURSE AND COMMUNITY-BASED FIELD EXPERIENCE

by

Lisa Ianni Reid

Bachelor of Arts
The Ohio State University, 1998

Master of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2002

________________________________________________________

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Language and Literacy

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2013

Accepted by:

Susi Long, Major Professor

Julia Lopéz-Robertson, Committee Member

Michelle Bryan, Committee Member

Erin Miller, Committee Member

Kara Brown, Committee Member

Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my teachers (from children to adults) who continuously move forward, inspiring me to move with them, on a path toward opportunity, justice, and equity for all.

If you can’t fly, then run
If you can’t run, then walk
If you can’t walk, then crawl
But whatever you do
You have to keep on moving forward

Martin Luther King, Jr.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Susi Long, who showed extraordinary compassion for taking me under her wing for the final year of my doctoral journey, the dissertation process. I am eternally grateful for her guidance, from her kind spirit to her tenacious character. This dissertation has arrived at this time only because it was graced by her most diligent efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge my additional doctoral committee members - Dr. Julia Lopéz-Robertson who encouraged me and challenged my thinking from my very first doctoral class, Dr. Michelle Bryan who communicated complex theories so that they made complete sense and deepened my understandings, Dr. Kara Brown who shared rich insights and inspired possibilities for my research, and Dr. Erin Miller who encouraged and supported me in amazing ways throughout this doctoral journey. Sincere thanks to these women for committing to support me throughout my process.

I would like to acknowledge Tracy Bailey the founder of Freedom Readers - the source of inspiration for Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. I would also like to acknowledge the preservice teachers and the children who participated in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. It was pleasure to be part of this learning experience with them. I realize that this study would not be possible without them. And I owe sincere gratitude to my literacy partner, Ms. Bea, for teaching me with her positive energy, intense passions, and enthusiastic support. And last, but not least, I would also like to acknowledge my dear friends and family members who each played a critical role in
moving me forward, continually inspiring and pushing me along the way to succeed. I must acknowledge these specific individuals: Bobbi, Jerry, Rosalie, and Blake. And I absolutely cannot forget that sweet, little soul who will always be my source of inspiration - my daughter, Auden.
ABSTRACT

Students of Color are projected to compromise an increasingly higher percentage of the student population in the United States within the next several years, while predominately White teachers will continue to compromise the teaching population. Schools continually fail to serve racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, particularly African American students. As such, a critical issue within teacher education is how to best prepare teachers to teach across the lines of ethnicity/race, language, and social class.

In response to this issue, this study looked closely at the identities, perspectives, and experiences of a teacher educator and undergraduate, preservice teachers throughout a one-credit education course infused with elements of equity pedagogies and an added community-based field experience. Using autoethnographic and narrative methodologies, this study sought to explore self-narratives as pathways to helping teacher educators and preservice teachers begin to recognize the need to work toward equity in education.

Findings of this study reflect complexities within the identities and socialization processes of a teacher educator and preservice teachers, providing insights for promoting the growth of a sociocultural consciousness required for teaching equity pedagogies. Findings indicate that the teacher educator and preservice teachers were strongly socialized to a view of Whiteness as normalized and, while most preservice teachers gained insights from the course and were able to counter deficit-laden assumptions of
children and their families as a result of their course experiences, there were considerable challenges involved in the process which included: examining the normalization of Whiteness, colorblind and racist dispositions, and the use of deflection strategies (deflecting from a focus on deficit perspectives of children and their families).

Implications are provided to shed light on what this might mean in terms of equity in literacy education, especially suggestions for supporting preservice teachers and teacher educators in recognizing inequities and making commitments toward changing an unjust society.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .......................................................... 1

  Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................. 3
  Purpose, Background, and Research Questions ............................................................. 4
  Significance of the Study ................................................................................................. 6
  Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................... 15
  Theoretical/Conceptual Framework ................................................................................ 17

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH ................................................. 31

  Multicultural Education ................................................................................................. 32
  Multicultural Teacher Education ..................................................................................... 36
  Critical Sociocultural Theory ......................................................................................... 51
  Critical Pedagogy ........................................................................................................... 58
  Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Teacher Education ............................................ 60
  The Role of Narrative in the Education of Teachers ...................................................... 68

CHAPTER THREE BACKGROUND, PILOT STUDY, AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................................. 76

  Rationale and Methodological Stance ........................................................................... 96
  Methodological Approaches ........................................................................................... 99
  Participants .................................................................................................................... 103
Recognizing Dispositions and Experiences Supportive of a Critical Stance...... 306
Specific Elements of the Course and the Development of a Critical Stance ...... 312
Elements of the Course that Impeded Learning.................................................. 344

CHAPTER NINE IMPLICATIONS........................................................................ 351
Implications for Teacher Educators.................................................................. 353
Advice for Teacher Educators as They Engage in Community-Based Field
Experiences with Preservice Teachers ............................................................ 379
Considerations for Programmatic Development in Teacher Education .......... 386
Implications for Further Research .................................................................. 392

CONCLUSION.................................................................................................. 395

REFERENCES ................................................................................................. 397

APPENDICES .................................................................................................. 418

Appendix A Freedom Readers Literacy Partners at Ivy Village
Apartments........................................................................................................ 418
Appendix B Informed Consent Guidance............................................................ 422
Appendix C EDTE 400 Course Syllabus............................................................ 424
Appendix D Critical Identity Narrative................................................................. 428
Appendix E Service Learning Blog................................................................... 429
Appendix F Service Learning Share..................................................................... 431
Appendix G Focus Group Interview Questions.................................................. 433
Appendix H Edited Freedom Readers Literacy Partners Handout....................... 434
Appendix I Bingo Activity.................................................................................. 444
Appendix J February 7th Agenda....................................................................... 445
Appendix K February 14th Agenda..................................................................... 447
Appendix L EDTE 400 List of Practicum Sites.................................................... 449
Appendix M Researcher’s Journal.................................................................456
Appendix N Step Forward, Step Back Activity.................................................474
Appendix O Power Shuffle Activity.................................................................477
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Freedom Readers Literacy Partners Activities ........................................... 116
Table 3.2. Timeline for dissertation study ........................................................................ 130
Table 5.1. Phrases I heard as a child that reflect assimilation ................................. 177
Table 7.1. Comments that reveal aspects of learning what it means to be White .......... 254
Table 7.2. Comments that reveal colorblind approaches ............................................. 258
Table 7.3. Preservice teachers’ prior assumptions and new learning ..................... 289
Table 7.4. Preservice teachers’ comments about children’s reading abilities .......... 297
Table 8.1. Doctoral readings that supported self-reflection ........................................ 312
Table 8.2. Sampling of undergraduates’ initial assumptions and counter narratives ... 320
Table 8.3. Required articles and film viewed for EDTE 400 ....................................... 321
Table 9.1. Resources for enacting tenets of critical pedagogy ................................. 357
Table 9.2. Texts and video for building a framework for Whiteness studies .......... 361
Table 9.3. Resources for activities to explore Whiteness and White privilege .......... 362
Table 9.4. Websites and films to support race talks with preservice teachers .......... 373
Table 9.5. Avenues for future research ........................................................................... 393
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Theoretical frame.................................................................18
Figure 2.1. Six bodies of research and practice ........................................32
Figure 3.1. Learning processes envisioned for EDTE 400 ..........................81
Figure 8.1 Literacy partners reading during shared reading time ................331
Figure 8.2. Literacy partners engaged in creating body sketches ...............333
Figure 8.3. Ms. Bea and me at Ivy Village Apartments ..............................344
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I recently met a dear friend for breakfast. Her name is Tracy. She is a colleague within a doctoral program in language and literacy. She is also the founder and director of a non-profit, after-school literacy program that she named Freedom Readers. I initially participated in Tracy’s program as a summer literacy tutor which inspired me to create a similar program, with Tracy’s encouragement and support, near the university that we both attend. The new program would involve education majors from the university in working one-to-one with children as their learning/teaching partners. I named the program, Freedom Readers Literacy Partners in honor of Tracy’s work and convictions. At breakfast that morning, I asked Tracy to share her story behind the name, Freedom Readers. She described a program developed to support children’s literacy skills. As an African American reflecting on her heritage, Tracy shared the impact of Frederick Douglas on her thinking: “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” The quote inspired her belief and purpose as a literacy educator recognizing that literacy leads to increased opportunities in life. Her hope was that Freedom Readers would open doorways to those opportunities.

Since meeting with Tracy, I thought about what the name Freedom Readers Literacy Partners means to me. While I fully understand that the road to opportunity or “being forever free” is not negotiated merely by learning to read; that obstacles to opportunity and “freedom” include the very real barriers of institutional and individual racism, oppression, and disprivilege, I believe that literacy is an element in the pathway. Thus, the freedoms to which I refer are not merely related to the act of being able to understand and reproduce words in print, but the ability of students and their teachers to use literacy skills to access multiple ways of thinking that can shed light on socially conscious strategies for recognizing and changing an unjust society (Bull, 2008; DuBois, 1994; Kincheloe, 2010). In considering what this means in terms of inequities in literacy
education as we continue to serve children of Color and children from low-income communities less well than we serve middle class White students (Ladson-Billings, 2009), I thought about this definition of freedom in terms of my work in preservice teacher education. I work with young people who are new to the field of education, many of whom may never have had opportunities to consider educational inequities and the importance of knowing and valuing children and their families beyond schools as they learn about supporting children as literate beings.

This led me to consider possibilities for a dissertation study that might utilize elements of Tracy’s *Freedom Readers* – namely building relationships with children beyond schools and one-to-one work with children to support their literacy growth – while emphasizing a focus on stories or narratives as pathways to understanding preservice teachers’ prior socialization processes in relation to their experiences in a course that would introduce them to equity issues in education. I also wanted to examine the growth of my own critical consciousness bringing to these ideas a belief that stories shared, created, or deconstructed help us understand who we are and how best to navigate the world (Reissman, 2008). I also believe that stories enable us to learn about the identities and experiences of others and hold great potential for helping us consider or include those stories in the decisions we make every day to recognize injustices and work to change them in our personal, academic and/or professional lives.

With these beliefs and convictions in mind, I developed *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, a community-based component of a one-credit course required of sophomore education majors. I saw this as one way to foster a kind of freedom that can only come about when teacher educators seek to broaden world views of preservice
teachers through a critical lens and socially conscious strategies, learning to challenge
deficit views of children and families from worlds beyond their own. I designed this
study to examine my own experiences and preservice teachers’ experiences as I prepared
for and we participated in this course and its community-based component.

**Statement of the Problem**

Research in teacher education suggests that an overwhelmingly White teaching
workforce is not meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations of P-12 students
(Gay & Howard, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Although the sociocultural and economic divide
has existed between students and teachers since long before the early days of
desegregation (Gay, 1993), our continued failure to serve all children equitably calls for
critical attention in teacher education. Achievement statistics and graduation rates show
over and over that schools fail to adequately serve students of Color and speakers of
languages other than English (Irvine, 2002; National Council for Education Statistics,
2011). For teacher educators, this raises the question of how to prepare the culturally
homogeneous teaching workforce to successfully teach culturally diverse groups of
students and has become a focal point for research in teaching and teacher education
research (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). A critical issue is the
lack of attention given in most teacher education programs to preparing teachers to teach
“across the lines of ethnicity/race, language, and social class” (Zeichner, 2003, p. 493).
And while current work is being done to develop entire degree programs that focus on
equity issues at their foundation (Powers-Costello, Lopéz-Robertson, Boutte, Miller,
Long, & Collins, 2012), the fact remains that in most teacher education programs,
attention to issues of diversity and equity are isolated to one course or even one
experience within a course. Given these realities, while working to promote programs that include more equity-based courses connected explicitly over time, it is important to understand if and how impact might be felt when only one course and in this case, a one-credit-hour course, is the only venue for teaching about issues of equity in an undergraduate teacher education program.

**Purpose, Background, and Research Questions**

This study was an attempt to shed light on what might (or might not) be accomplished when a one-credit course taught to university undergraduates focuses on issues of equity through the addition of a community-based component supported by specific readings and assignments. I wanted to better understand if and how, through supported literacy interactions with children outside of schools, teacher candidates – within the constraints of a one-credit-hour course – might be introduced to and gain some critical awareness that would alter pervasive deficit views of children and families and the need for more equitable practices. Different from service learning or other partnering programs typical as one-credit-hour experiences (Anderson & Erickson, 2003; Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001; Coffey, 2010; Feinstein, 2005; and Seigel, 1994), my plan would not only involve preservice teachers in partnering with children in a community setting, it would also introduce them to the notion of a critical lens, an introduction to being able to acknowledge oppressions, injustice, and inequity and to identify ways of thinking (namely negative assumptions and deficit perspectives) that might contribute, maintain, or perpetuate them.

As a doctoral student at a flagship state university in the southeastern United States (U.S.), I was assigned to teach EDTE 400, *Learning through Community Service*, a
course required for education majors early in their academic program. Because the majority of undergraduate education majors at the university were White women, recognizing statistics about students’ limited experiences in racial, linguistic, and social worlds other than their own (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and reflecting on findings from my pilot study of preservice teachers (see Chapter Three), I assumed that the students would enter the course demonstrating deficit views of children and families of Color typical of their demographic (Nieto, 1999). Thus, I was most interested in learning if, through this course, preservice teachers would (a) gain new awarenesses that would reflect positive views of the identities, knowledge, and capabilities of the children and their families and (b) connect those new insights to understanding the need for more equitable practices.

Just as important, I wanted to examine the process of my own evolving critical sociocultural consciousness and ability to use it to inform my role as instructor of this course. Given the context of a one-credit-hour course, and recognizing that many teacher education programs devote little more than this amount of time to the exploration of these issues (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Gay, 2010), this study was developed to understand the successes and challenges that might be involved in undertaking a task of this magnitude in a short period of time. Grounded in intersecting methodologies of autoethnography and narrative inquiry, I asked the following research questions:

- What might preservice teachers learn from a one-credit hour undergraduate course developed to support them in understanding the need for more equitable literacy practices and to promote positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities in a low-income, African-American community?

- What specific elements of the course were supportive of teacher candidates’ learning? What elements impeded learning or were not supportive?
• What can I learn about my role as the course instructor in fostering undergraduates’ learning?

• What can I learn about the growth and development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness in the process of this study?

**Significance of the Study**

*Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Shaul in Freire, 1970, p. 34)*

For the past few decades, the expansion and growth of debates, research, courses, conferences, and workshops in multicultural education and equity pedagogies have expanded and gained strength for several reasons: (a) teacher educators have begun to realize that historical efforts to further multicultural education too often reflect a “banking model” (Freire, 1970, p. 72) that is not reflective of tenets of multicultural education and equity pedagogies (see Definitions in this chapter) nor effective in supporting instructional reform that has a positive impact on students most underserved (Banks, 2004), (b) scholars are finally beginning to listen to the extensive work of researchers and educators of Color who have long known that educational institutions and practices are skewed toward the success of students from dominant cultural and linguistic groups (Gay, 2010; Ladson, Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2009), and (c) demographic changes in the U.S. are leading to more diverse classroom populations (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) although the argument is made that our nation has always been diverse and that inequities have simply never been dealt with effectively in schools. Thus, a critical multicultural education and new work in equity pedagogies are responses to the continued disparities in the education of students who attend public schools in the U.S. and inequitable opportunities for student success.
This study explores the effort to infuse tenets of critical multicultural education in a one-credit undergraduate university course for the purpose of laying the groundwork for preservice teachers to see a need for equity pedagogies. Gay and Howard (2000) provide a strong case for why multicultural teacher education is important for the 21st century. They argue that explicit professional preparation is needed to address the increasing racial, cultural, and linguistic divide between teachers who are predominately White European American and K-12 students of Color. They address two factors that have major implications for teacher education: (a) racial separation is increasing in public schools across the U.S. where students of Color are the majority in certain areas, and (b) because of the largely White teacher population, many teachers do not share backgrounds with the students they teach. This study views a commitment to teaching for social justice as an essential, initial step in the direction of enacting critical multicultural education and equity pedagogies for classroom teachers and teacher educators. It explores the challenges inherent to the process of moving in this direction for preservice teachers and teacher educators. As such, this study has the potential to provide insights for ways to foster this commitment in teacher education and possibilities for enacting critical multicultural education and equity pedagogies in short-term (one-credit) education courses.

**Continued Existence of the Color Line**

A century ago, W.E.B. Du Bois (1994) predicted that conflict and controversy among racial groups, particularly African and European Americans, would continue throughout and beyond the 20th century. He explained that despite the social activity and interaction between Blacks and Whites, there continued to exist, “almost no community
of intellectual life or point of transfer where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of the other” (p. 149). The Color line Du Bois spoke of then has become even more complex. As Gay (2003) wrote, people from different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups coexist but do not create “genuine communities in which they know, relate to, and care deeply about one another” (p. 30). There continues to exist a lack of genuine community between schools/teachers and diverse groups of students (Long & Volk, 2010). It is believed that this lack of community – continued existence of the Color line - between schools/teachers and diverse groups of students plays a major role in contributing to existing as well as growing disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among minoritized racial and ethnic groups (Souto-Manning, 2010).

**Demographic Imperatives**

Students of Color are projected to make up 41% of the total U.S. school population by the year 2020, with 67% concentrated in urban areas (NCES, 2010). These statistics add challenges in the education of children of Color for various reasons. One in particular is the fact that 83% of the public school teaching population is White and middle class (NCES, 2011) and many of these teachers are not well equipped to teach in schools that serve children of Color (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Educational statistics reflect the effects of this lack of teacher preparation for students from diverse backgrounds, particularly for African American and Hispanic student populations. African American and Hispanic student populations continually score lower on test scores in every subject in comparison to White students, with African American students continuously scoring the lowest. African American and Latino/a student populations
reflect the highest percentage of dropout rates in comparison to White students, with Latino populations continually representing the highest percentage (NCES, 2011).

**Lack of Teacher Knowledge: Call to Action**

Literature widely suggests that, in spite of this demographic shift, preservice and practicing teachers continue to fail to embrace the history, knowledge, and expertise of children of Color because they (a) demonstrate very little cross-cultural knowledge and, as a result possess stereotypical beliefs about students of Color, and (b) are unaware of racism, discrimination, and structural aspects of inequity in society and schooling (Gay, 2010, Long et al., 2008; Sleeter, 2008). As a result, teacher education programs have been called to action to address these gaps in teacher knowledge so teachers are better prepared to educate all children and to challenge the continued existence of inequities associated with the Color line (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In response to these issues, this study operated on two levels. On one level, it examined the process of prospective teachers, most of whom are White, as they engaged in curriculum that urged them to reflect on stereotypical beliefs, discrimination, and inequity in society and schools while participating in cross-cultural, community-based experiences with children and families. On another level, this study represents an attempt to explore my own process, as the teacher educator and community site leader, as I: (a) restructured and taught curriculum reflective of critical multicultural education and equity pedagogies; (b) guided preservice teachers in community-based experiences with children and families; and (c) negotiated understandings that developed from my cross-racial relationships with others during the process of teaching this course and leading the course’s community experience component.
Gaps in Teacher Education

Although teacher education programs have taken strides to answer this *call to action*, many challenges continue to exist. Teacher educators must engage preservice teachers in critical pedagogy that (a) promotes visions for multicultural education and ideological commitments to culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice, (b) advocates examinations of systemic inequities in society and schooling, (c) supports cross-cultural experiences and learning, and (d) addresses educational achievement issues with regard to inequities. However, we are only just beginning to see documentation of this occurring in preservice teacher education programs (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Coffey, 2010; Lowenstein, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Turner-Nash, 2012).

**Making an ideological commitment.** Research in diversity and teacher education strongly reflects that ideology, dispositions, and beliefs matter (Hollins, 2008; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2005). Grant and Gibson (2011) explained that in order for pre-service teachers to “enact visions of multicultural education, they must make an ideological commitment to multicultural education and hegemonic forces that define difference as a problem” (p. 29). However, teacher education programs in general have not demonstrated that they support the development of such dispositions, ideologies, or commitments (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sleeter, 2008). Researchers call for studies that investigate what teacher education programs might look like that promote teacher candidates’ visions for effective multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and ideological commitments to social justice (Gay, 2010; Zeichner, 2009). This question is at the center of debate concerning how to prepare teachers for diversity. This
study contributes to this conversation by sharing insights gained through examination of preservice teachers’ and my own development of ideological commitments as I examine our processes related to a one-credit course.

**Understanding resistance.** Another major concern in the preparation of teachers for diversity is the resistance that some teacher educators report that is experienced by many European American students to approaches that require them to confront issues of racism in schools and in their own lives (Nieto, 2009). This is often an uncomfortable reflective practice for students who have never had supported opportunities for such reflection (Long, Anderson, Clark, & McCraw, 2008; Lowenstein, 2009; McIntyre, 2002). In particular, it is reported that some preservice teachers resist examinations of identity with regard to race and culture and commitments to social justice (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Irvine, 2003; Turner-Nash, 2012). As part of the reflective coursework necessary for countering stereotypes and misconceptions, this study documented preservice teachers’ reactions to examining their own identities with regard to culture and schooling. Thus, this study contributes further insights to understanding the resistance or lack of resistance encountered when engaging university students in the examination of their own biases.

**Analyzing inequities.** Teacher educators and equity scholars also advocate for examinations of systemic discrimination and oppression within and beyond the social contexts of schooling and suggest that preservice teachers examine and analyze structural inequities and then examine how these forms of inequities are reproduced in schools (Nieto, 2009). However, there are few studies of what happens when the examinations of structural inequities are part and parcel of preservice teacher education programs (Brown,
particularly in short-term, one-credit courses. This study helps to fill the gap by illuminating students’ processes of identifying oppression in their lives and the roles they play within the system of oppression. It also suggests some of the barriers that prevent preservice teachers in further examining structural inequities.

**Learning more about cross-cultural experiences.** The argument has been made that one way that teacher educators might engage preservice teachers in learning about children’s cultures is through cross-cultural, community-based field experiences outside the classroom and the school (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001). Teacher educators who engage preservice students in learning about cultures beyond their own advocate a focus on appreciating cultural and linguistic knowledge (Banks, 2004; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Lopez-Robertson, et al., 2010). This is recognized as presenting challenges because many preservice teachers tend to essentialize or romanticize cultures and cultural difference in the process of getting to know students from diverse backgrounds (Haberman, 1991a; Ladson-Billings, 2000). When students are engaged in the field experiences without reflective coursework and supervision to help scaffold their experiences, the experiences often end up reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions (Zeichner, 2003). The work of this study attempts to examine both, as data were analyzed to understand what might be accomplished in terms of contradicting misconceptions about children and families when opportunities for supported reflection were provided in conjunction with cross-cultural experiences with students in a community setting. The work of this study also provides
insights from my own reflective work as teacher educator engaged in helping preservice teachers scaffold their experiences and the challenges that were posed in the process.

**Addressing issues of cultural discontinuity that impact achievement.** Situated in the U.S. South, this study examines various aspects of teacher preparation that may impact statistics reporting low achievement of children of Color and children from low-income. The Southern Education Foundation (2010) reports that students of Color constitute 51% of the South’s public school children. In all southern states, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students as well as low income students of all races and ethnicities score below average in every subject of state required tests. Students from the same racial and ethnic groups also graduate at lower rates than White students in the South (SEF, 2010). These statistics reflect an unjust educational system that does not successfully serve children of Color and/or children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The literature is clear that, to impact achievement, teachers must first examine their own beliefs and recognize biases about students and students’ backgrounds, and then understand the impact of those biases on opportunities for equitable teaching that raises achievement (Nieto, 2009).

This study shares insights gained from a close analysis of preservice teachers’ conceptions of their identities and experiences, ideologies, and dispositions and how these elements contribute to and/or prevent developing understandings that affirm the identities and knowledge of children and families from diverse backgrounds. Irvine (2003) attributes one aspect of the achievement gap in U.S. schools to the “cultural discontinuity” (p. 7) that exists between White teachers and students of Color and explains that this results when teachers and students bring different, and often conflicting,
cultures to the classroom. Studies have shown that when teachers reflect on their own cultural identities, ideologies, and dispositions, they are presented with opportunities to become aware of their own racial and cultural privileges and biases that affect their ability to teach equitably (McIntyre & Picower, 2009; Tatum, 2007). These reflections engage teachers in the process of becoming more critically and socioculturally conscious, as they (a) become better able to recognize differences between themselves and their students of Color, (b) identify their privileges and biases and how they impact equitable teaching, and (c) become more likely to unlearn biased dispositions to learn about their students and teach more equitably (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Derman-Sparks, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). As teachers become more critically and socioculturally conscious, they become better able to understand the need for more culturally relevant teaching. This pedagogy is seen to hold possibilities for raising student achievement because it potentially “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20).

**The One-Credit Course**

In sum, this dissertation study represents my initial attempt to respond to the critique that there is a lack of attention given in teacher education programs to preparing teachers to teach “across the lines of ethnicity/race, language, and social class” (Zeichner, 2003, p. 493). To do so, this study was situated in an entry-level education course that I intentionally restructured and infused with tenets of critical multicultural education and equity/culturally relevant pedagogies for the purpose of better preparing teachers with introductory understandings of the importance of challenging deficit views in, racially,
culturally, and linguistically diverse settings. Important to the significance of this study is that it was only a one-credit course and, while we work to promote the development of long-term programmatic experiences, it is imperative that we understand what might be accomplished in the context of the brief moments in time that are so frequently the only allotment to this kind of study in colleges of education.

Thus, related to calls from the field for further research, this study considers what happens when a one-credit preservice teacher education course, taught with a community-based field experience and a focus on a critical stance, attempts to introduce teacher candidates to the following processes for the purpose of understanding why schools need more equitable teaching: (a) examinations of social, political, and institutional hegemonic forces that define difference as a problem and that generate and perpetuate oppression and inequity; (b) examinations of identities and positioning within these hegemonic and oppressive structures; (c) reflections on cross-cultural experiences with a focus on gaining additive and broadened perspectives of children’s identities; and (d) reflections on the impact of new awarenesses on students’ understandings about their role as prospective classroom teachers. This study considers the processes involved in such an endeavor from two frames of reference: (a) preservice teachers’ experiences and reflections, and (b) the teacher educator’s experiences and reflections.

**Definition of Terms**

Many terms specific to the study of equity, race, and teaching are repeatedly referred to throughout this document. I provide definitions of those terms in this section because they are pertinent to readers’ ability to interpret this study from the perspectives from which it was designed:
Counter-Narratives: Counter-narratives (or counter-stories) are stories aimed at countering the legitimacy of pejorative myths, narratives and dominant views about people of Color (Bell, 1995; Delgado, 1989).

Critical Consciousness: Stems from the term Conscientização or “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (Freire, 1970, p. 109). It is the ability to perceive social, political, and economic oppression and to take action against the oppressive elements of society.

Critical Multicultural Education: Multicultural education is curriculum and pedagogy that engages students in critical thinking and reflexive practices (Kincheloe, 2005), examinations of oppression and society structures that oppress (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010), and explorations of identity (Harro, 2000; Kincheloe, 2005), particularly the notion of Whiteness (McIntyre, 1997; Sullivan, 2006; Thompson, 2003), and fosters thinking about agency to transform the social, cultural, and institutional structures that generate and perpetuate oppression and make society and schooling more just (Bull, 2008; Nieto, 2002).

Cultural Capital: The cultural characteristics, practices, and values possessed by different cultural groups (Bourdieu, 1986).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) or culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; Villegas Lucas, 2002): One aspect of the equity pedagogy outlined by Banks (2004). In culturally relevant pedagogy, educators use their knowledge of students’ backgrounds, cultures, and identities to shape pedagogical practices and curricular decisions.

Equity Pedagogies: Teaching that facilitates the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups which includes using a variety of teaching styles that are consistent with a wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups (Banks, 1994, p. 5).

Multicultural Education: Largely a way of thinking that is concerned with theory and practices that reflect tenets of humanism, constructivism, and equity pedagogies (Banks, 1994; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It involves dimensions such as content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1994). A major goal of multicultural education is to reform schools and institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality (Banks, 1994, p. 3).

Positionality: Represents how a person is positioned and how position affects point of view. In regard to culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2010) explained that learning to discern “positionality” is important for teachers, researchers, and authors because it affects how they analyze and address educational issues during
their teacher preparation and understanding of pedagogy. It also involves exploring the constraints of positionality and the power of one’s perspective (Gay, 2000, p. 225).

**Preservice Teachers:** The use of “preservice teachers” in this study is in reference to mainly undergraduate education majors (of sophomore standing) who plan to enter an undergraduate major at the elementary, middle, or secondary level.

**Reflexive Praxis** (Freire, 1970): Stems from the notion of praxis, the “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 234). It is a necessary practice of liberatory pedagogy.

**Sociocultural consciousness** (Villegas and Lucas, 2002): A way of thinking that addresses the need for human beings (preservice teachers in the case of this study) to expand their perceptions to include awareness that one’s worldview is shaped profoundly by one’s life experiences (p. 27) and that there are many ways of living, learning, and teaching different from one’s own but legitimate, purposeful, and effective.

**Whiteness:** In this study Whiteness is defined as “an amalgamation of qualities including the cultures, histories, experiences, discourses, and privileges shared by Whites” (Marx, 2006, p. 6).

**Theoretical Framework for the Study**

The framework guiding this study evolved from my personal experiences and understandings that developed throughout my doctoral program and continue to develop as I write this dissertation. First, through reflective practices from the onset of my doctoral coursework, I began to explore my own learning and literacies as well as my identity influenced by cultural and linguistic experiences. Simultaneously, I explored scholarly work that proposed new understandings about children’s identities and literacies beyond schools. Foundational to gaining new insights were mini-ethnographic inquiries that I conducted within children’s communities as course assignments. As a result, this study is grounded in overlapping theories that embody insights gained through these learning processes; they are: (a) critical sociocultural theory; (b) critical pedagogy;
(c) identity and Whiteness studies; (d) the power of narrative, (e) social justice teaching; and (f) culturally responsive pedagogy and critical multicultural education (Figure 1.1). Though these theories are intertwined, I will describe each distinctively (here and in greater detail in Chapter Two) to be able to highlight key concepts used to frame this study that was developed to support anti-racist and social justice education.

Figure 1.1. Theoretical Frame

**Critical Sociocultural Theory**

The framework grounding this study is rooted in historical tenets of sociocultural theories regarding the social and cultural nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). As I engaged in reflective practices and ethnographic inquiries throughout my doctoral program, I gained a deeper understanding of human development as culturally situated and influenced through language and social participation within cultural communities (Heath, 1983; Rogoff, 2003). I became more aware of the cultural contexts of my identity (see a detailed reflection of my sociocultural identity in Chapter Six) as well as students’ identities and how all of our cultural identities are influenced by the cultural, racial, or ethnic groups to which we belong (Anzaldúa, 1999; Heath, 1983; Nieto, 2002).
I developed a profound understanding that literacy learning is socially and culturally mediated (Long & Volk, 2010) and that degrees of learning and uses of literacy are functions of one’s cultural identity (Pérez, 2004). These understandings strengthened my awareness of children’s cultural identities and cultures as essential aspects to their education processes and successes (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Villegas-Lucas, 2002). I became more attentive to children’s multiple literacies and ways of being in the world and gained insights for supporting children’s and families’ cultural and social understandings (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005; Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2004).

My beliefs about literacy and learning are grounded in a sociocultural view that sees culture and language of the individual, home, family and community as rich foundations of expertise (Souto-Manning, 2010) while recognizing that many studies have found that this cultural, local, and linguistic knowledge is not often esteemed or even accepted in school settings (Boutte, 2007; Boykin, 1994; Delpit, 1988; Schramm-Pate & Jeffries, 2008; Valdés, 2001) leading to social and educational inequities. In this way, tenets of the critical aspects of sociocultural theory nurtured my understandings of why students’ cultural, local, and linguistic knowledge is not often valued or even recognized in school settings, while also helping me reconceptualize my view of education and my purpose as an educator as described below.

A commitment to critical sociocultural theory requires that I focus on power structures relative to the ways that children’s identities are privileged or disprivileged and knowledge is valued or devalued in schools and society (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Long & Volk, 2007). Critical sociocultural theory supports me in: (a) acknowledging and understanding the multiple ways of being in the world; (b) valuing students’,
children’s, and families’ cultural and social understandings of the world; (c) seeking insights about the way literacy is negotiated within social and cultural experiences (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004); and (d) interrogating issues of power, identity, and agency across and within cultural and linguistic contexts (Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007; Long, Volk, Baines, & Tisdale, 2013).

In this study, a critical sociocultural frame helped me understand possible disconnects between pre-service teachers’: (a) identities; (b) perceptions of children’s identities, literacy, learning; (c) experiences in children’s communities; and (d) developing understandings of education and their role as prospective educators. As I planned the preservice course highlighted in this study, I centered on critical sociocultural teaching practices to encourage students to draw on home and community resources and acknowledge them as valid in the learning experiences of all children, while also being aware of issues of power and privilege. I created assignments that required preservice teachers to identify misperceptions in their knowledge or attitudes and dispositions about children from diverse backgrounds and how those misperceptions lead to inequitable teaching practices. The most critical of components of critical sociocultural theory within my study focused on learned racism and discrimination that act as barriers to teacher preparation for a multicultural society. Thus, this study drew on critical sociocultural theory to help me and my students understand pathways as well as barriers to effective teacher practices both institutionally and personally.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy is another essential component of this study’s theoretical frame because it takes critical sociocultural theory into the realm of pedagogy or educational
practice. I understand critical pedagogy to involve learning the political structures and power relations in schools and wider forms of education in society for the purpose of assisting teachers in helping students mitigate those structures and relationships (Kincheloe, 2005). It is my belief that teaching for justice, equality, achievement, and success requires love, tolerance, and humane interconnectedness (Freire, 1970). I believe that critical pedagogy is a vehicle by which individuals can arrive at critical knowledge that “seeks to connect with the corporeal and emotional in a way that understands at multiple levels and seeks to assuage human suffering” (Kincheloe, 2010, p. 9).

The work of Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinburg (2011) provide some basic tenets of critical pedagogy. Their tenets are important for understanding one’s identity and position in a power structured society. They describe a philosophy that some identities are more privileged over others and that every identity has a role in the system of oppression. I believe, given the context of this study and the fact that it is a majority of White preservice teachers who take this course, that these tenets are particularly important for examining Whiteness:

- All thought is central to the formation mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted;
- Facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription;
- The relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption;
- Language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness);
- Certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully
reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, and inevitable;

- Oppression has many faces, and focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g. class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them.

- Mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (p. 164).

This understanding of critical pedagogy influenced how I structured the course as well as my decisions about the kinds of data I collected within the context of that course. The lens of critical pedagogy led to my focus on issues of power, privilege, and oppression as I initiated this study, but it also forced me to focus on how those issues played out in the formation of my identity as well as my students’ identities and our teaching practices and to ask how we might better prepare teachers to challenge their/our socialization to oppressive and disprivileging policies and practices. Drawing on this aspect of my theoretical frame, I developed curriculum to engage preservice teachers in dialogue that questioned existing knowledge and problematized traditional power relations that serve to marginalize specific groups and individuals (Freire, 2000; Souto-Manning, 2009). This lens was also at the foundation of my goal to help students frame these problems in a larger social, cultural, and political context in order to solve them (Kincheloe, 2010). Critical pedagogy guided my attempts to understand how to develop curriculum and lead preservice teachers in contexts that included the “empowerment of individuals” (Kincheloe, 2010, p. 164) and fostered the desire to confront structural injustices in society. These understandings enabled me to investigate, examine, critique, and reinvestigate identity formation, being, and thinking (Freire, 1970).
Although the broad definition of critical pedagogies described above grounds this study, specific bodies of work within that frame focused my interest in processes of reconceptualizing education and envisioning a new role and purpose within teacher education. Those specific elements were: (a) critical examinations of identity and Whiteness studies; (b) anti-racist studies and elements of critical race theory, and narrative inquiry; and (c) social justice education.

**Identity and Whiteness Studies**

Critical theorists propose new methods for researching and analyzing ways in which individuals are socialized in societies and cultures (Giroux, 2010; Hammer & Kellner, 2009; Hinchey, 2009; Kincheloe, 2007; Steinburg, 2009). One method involves the critical examination of identities, particularly Whiteness, through pedagogy and qualitative research. My study was aligned with basic assumptions of criticalist work for the purpose of examining my identity socialization and reflecting on my White identity as I considered my roles as researcher, teacher, and theorist.

**Whiteness studies.** When I refer to Whiteness, I understand it as a system and ideology of White dominance and superiority that marginalizes and oppresses people of Color (McIntyre, 2002). I was particularly drawn to Whiteness studies as an element of the framework for this study because they helped me better understand and articulate how students and a teacher educator might be socialized to Whiteness as a norm and then to use that foundation to understand more about developing a critical consciousness with regard to ourselves and others. Whiteness studies reveal Whiteness as a process that leads to further stereotyping and privileging of the status quo (Phoenix, 1997). It unveils the normality of Whiteness and presents it as significant and open for examination in
teacher preparation programs (McIntyre, 2002). I believe that examining Whiteness and the many ways its normalization maintains inequities in schools and societies is one way to disrupt oppressive cycles and dysconscious racism (King, 1991) and work towards more equitable teaching practices. I considered these insights as important to informing my ability to help students become more critically conscious of themselves and the children they worked with in their service learning sites.

A major objective within the course and field experience was for students to reflect on what they were learning about themselves and about the children and adults they meet within the community. Reflective practice began early within the course when students were asked to reflect on their social identities and to name forces as well as their own positioning within systems of oppression and human suffering (Harro, 2000). Because most students were White, my understanding of Whiteness studies helped me frame my analysis of their reflections within social identities and systems of oppression that are embedded in the dominant, hegemonic forces of White power, privilege, and positioning within society and schools (Giroux, 1997; Johnson, 2006; Picower, 2009). In fact, my design of the reflective identity exercises in themselves was grounded in my understanding from Whiteness studies about the importance of leading White preservice teachers and preservice teachers of Color to less resistant responses to learning about the dominant presence and oppressive nature of Whiteness (Sullivan, 2006).

**Examining identity.** Also integral to the framework that guides this work (and connected to my belief in the importance of Whiteness studies) is my belief in the importance of students exploring their own identities and positioning within schools and society as essential to understanding why and then how to create more equitable
educational environments in schools. I draw from bodies of literature that suggest that opportunities to explore identity help us recognize and challenge the dominant presence of Whiteness as we begin naming forces of oppression and developing new knowledge about our identities and positioning as educators (Cochran-Smith, 2000; McIntyre, 2002). According to Kincheloe (2005), it is through this process that pre-service teachers can understand the complexities of schooling and enact pedagogy that cultivates social change and transformation. Individual and personal analysis, reflection, and action are seen as starting points for social justice and institutional change (Fullan, 1993; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Thus, my study was framed in part by the understanding that one must first gain critical consciousness and understandings of the complexities of White identities and Whiteness before supporting and enacting visions of social justice and anti-racist education.

The Power of Narrative

The power of narrative is an important element of this framework because, drawing from Critical Race Theory and the field of narrative inquiry, I used elements of it as a means to invite pre-service teachers to develop a sense of, and possibly, a commitment to anti-racist education. Narrative is highly valued in Critical Race Theory because its focus is on using narratives to: “(a) unmask and explore racism, (b) employ storytelling and counter-narrative to give testimony to voices of the oppressed, and (c) critique liberalism and its effects on laws and policies in schools” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 12-13). This was indispensable as a foundation for my beliefs as I constructed course assignments used as data in this study. For example, through students’ coursework, I asked them to create counter-narratives about the children with whom they partnered in
the community. This use of narrative as foundational to the study was particularly foundational because it is a method often associated with anti-racist research grounded in CRT as it can create a space for previously silenced or unheard, marginalized, and oppressed voices to be heard (Duncan, 2005). I was drawn to narratives, particularly counter-narratives, because they are described by race theorists as having the power to disrupt common misunderstandings of those who live on the periphery of society or who are not part of the dominant culture (Perry, 2003; Riessman, 2008).

**Social Justice Education**

Also foundational to my theoretical frame is work that provides insights for understanding and supporting the convergence of anti-racist and social justice education. Nieto (2002) explained that anti-racist and social justice education involves a “personal, collective, and institutional odyssey” (p.187). I believe that teacher education plays a crucial role in this process of making society more just (Bull, 2008). This study was framed by beliefs that recognize the need for anti-racist and social justice education and understands that making a commitment to teach in this way involves a transformative process of becoming more aware of self, others, and society in general.

This study views self-reflective examinations of identity with regard to race and culture and conversations of identity, race, oppression, and inequities as necessary and initial steps towards identifying societal and schooling inequities and considering commitments to social justice. Freire (1970) named this type of process a “thematic investigation” (p. 107) and described it as a “striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness…a starting point for the educational process or for the cultural action of a liberating character” (p.107).
Kincheloe (2005) urged teacher educators to take a position that reflects their support for social justice and make it comprehensible to students without imposing their views. In the same light, the role of teacher education reflective of anti-racist and social justice education is dialectical in nature. It involves a relinquishment of the authority of truth by the teacher through the process of dialogue and the development of new understandings. Freire (1970) called this dialectical praxis and explained that it entails the formation of partnerships between teacher and students that engage all persons in naming injustices and exploring various truths in the world. I believe that this dialectical process can lead to action that changes oppressive and unjust systems. This study viewed dialectical praxis and partnerships as means to liberate students so that they may envision their own role in helping others liberate themselves.

Teacher education guided by a social justice framework acknowledges that social justice education is important for all students (Nieto, 2002). All students must become aware of and be able to identify inequities in society, so that they may learn to challenge discriminatory practices. They must further engage in the critical analysis of diversity and inequities and learn (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). Teacher education guided by a social justice framework also acknowledges the need for equitable and educational opportunities that “enable individuals to aspire and live lives that they find fulfilling and that contribute appropriately to the fulfillment of others’ lives” (Bull, 2008, p.37). Teaching for social justice seeks to broaden teachers’ understandings of success and pathways to achieving different accounts of success (Bull, 2008, p. 121). My study is grounded in a commitment to this process – the process of helping teachers understand
social justice education as it seeks to provide insights that liberate teacher educators and preservice teachers from narrow understandings of pathways to success.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and Critical Multicultural Education**

Banks (2004) proposed five dimensions of critical multicultural education. Drawing from his work as well as from critical theory, I see these dimensions as defining my stance on critical multicultural education and used them to guide much of my work when planning the preservice experience and this study. Those dimensions include (a) knowledge construction, (b) content integration, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) empowering school climates and social structures. This study draws from these tenets as foundational to understanding culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) or culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; Villegas Lucas, 2002), a curricular, philosophical and theoretical model that encourages educators to use their knowledge of students’ backgrounds, cultures, and identities to shape pedagogical practices and curricular decisions (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

CRP is validating, comprehensive, empowering, multidimensional, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2010), but is often vastly different from the pedagogies that preservice teachers have encountered in their past educational experiences. I drew from the notion that preservice teachers who are typically White, middle class, women, have frequently been socialized to see schools as equitable because they reflect their own cultural and linguistic worlds as normalized; they tend to define success as achieved solely through meritocracy (Gay & Howard, 2000; Nieto, 2002). Few understand that most school structures and pedagogies are designed for and by dominant cultural ways of teaching and learning models (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This is
a view I took with me into the study along with the notion that prospective teachers, more often than not, enter teacher education programs socialized to accept school knowledge as objective, take a passive role in learning, and see teacher knowledge as the only legitimate source of knowledge and as a result, they often resist multicultural curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

CRP is also foundational to my work as it seeks to counter typical understandings of education by challenging dominant cultural norms as the norm. It is grounded in three basic tenets: the importance of teaching for cultural knowledge, academic achievement, and critical consciousness. The course that I restructured and that was the focus of this study was designed to draw on these tenets to provide preservice teachers with new and expanded ways of understanding education from a critical multicultural point of view. The preservice teachers were required to reflect on existing pedagogical practices and curricular decisions as they gained new knowledge of children outside the dominant culture and considered alternatives to narrow views of curriculum and teaching practice that privilege some children while disprivileging others. CRP and a critical stance on multicultural education provided a foundation for considering those alternatives.

**Conclusion to Chapter One**

This study is situated within six intersecting bodies of thought: (a) critical sociocultural theory, (b) critical pedagogy, (c) identity and Whiteness studies, (d) the power of narrative, (e) social justice teaching, and (f) culturally responsive pedagogy and critical multicultural education. Using this theoretical frame, I explored how a teacher educator might better understand possibilities for contributing to the development of new freedoms - broadened and more inclusive perspectives accompanied by awareness of
institutional and individual racism, oppression, and disprivilege as real barriers to equitable teaching and student achievement - through a one-credit, undergraduate course. The course included a community engagement component called, *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, designed as a space where children and prospective teachers might begin to form relationships centered around literacy and sharing stories. This was coupled with my support for the preservice teachers’ introduction to a critical stance and using that stance for the university students and for me to reflect on our own identity socialization and the course experience. My hope was that we would learn in ways that would help us recognize and unlearn barriers – misconceptions and stereotypes – that keep us from acknowledging and building on the literacy capabilities of children. I believed that these opportunities would broaden perspectives and support preservice teachers in acknowledging educational and societal inequities, hoping that they would also reflect on a commitment to social justice education. Interpreting data within these beliefs, I focused on contributing to the field of preservice teacher education by offering informed insights to lead toward a clearer, more purposeful and a more critical, multicultural teacher education serving as a practice of freedom for teacher educators, prospective and practicing teachers, and the children they teach.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Informing the design, implementation, and analysis of data in this study are six bodies of research and practice: (a) multicultural education, (b) multicultural teacher education, (c) critical sociocultural theory, (d) critical pedagogy, (e) culturally responsive pedagogy and teacher education, and (f) the role of narrative in the education of teachers (Figure 2.1). Concepts from the fields of multicultural education and multicultural teacher education provided the pedagogical foundation for my development of the undergraduate course through which data were collected. Critical pedagogy prompted - for me as the teacher educator - the beginnings of reflexive praxis necessary to changing practice in teacher education. Culturally responsive pedagogy provided possibilities for pedagogical alternatives to dominant culture literacy practices as the preservice teachers and I used those alternatives in literacy engagements with children in the community-based field experience. Finally, understandings about the importance of narrative as vehicles for exploring self and other and ultimately being able to construct counter narratives to dominant ideologies were key to enacting and analyzing experiences in the course. These six bodies of research and practice not only helped to guide my decisions in structuring this course, they also deepened the understandings that I gained through my participation in the study and its process.
Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has long been considered to be important for advocating a pluralistic society in which diversity is embraced (Banks, 1994; Gay, 2004), but it is even more so in the 21st century to address: (a) the increasing racial, cultural, and linguistic divide between teachers who are predominately European American and K-12 students who are increasingly from ethnic groups and groups of Color (Villegas & Lucas, 2002); (b) the increasing racial separation in public schools across the U.S. where students of Color are the majority in certain areas (Irvine, 2003); and (c) the need for all children, but particularly White children, to learn how to embrace diversity, acknowledge their own role in perpetuating racism, and commit to anti-bias work (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011).

Approaches to multicultural education were initially designed to counter what Grant and Sleeter (2007) referred to as the “business as usual” (p. 3) approach - an ineffective teaching approach that is frequently used in schools, which involves teaching strategies that are routine, scripted, worksheet-based, and geared toward high stakes test preparation and focused on primarily dominant culture content. Multicultural education is a means to counter schooling that continues to widen the achievement gap between students of Color and/or students living in poverty and White, middle class students by...
offering pedagogy that is responsive to children’s cultures, promotes the belief in and acknowledgement and appreciation of all children, and provides equal, educational opportunities for all students (Irvine, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Cases have been made for why multicultural education is needed for all students. Many authors (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Howard, 1999; Kincheloe, Steinburg, Rodriguez, & Chenault, 1998; Kivel, 2002, Wise, 2009) have addressed the need for White people, in particular, to embrace diversity, confront personal histories that perpetuate racism, and learn ways to engage in anti-bias work.

**Visions and approaches.** Sleeter (2001) argued that the visions for improving multicultural education need to specifically address what is meaningful, successful, and equitable for all students. Quite a few educators have articulated such a vision (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2008; Haberman, 1991a; Irvine 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). One common thread running through each vision is that multicultural education is schooling for a democratic society that supports all children in developing a love of learning and discovering personal joy and fulfillment in the process of learning (Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2008). Multicultural education is also committed to anti-racist, anti-sexist, and social justice pedagogies (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Irvine, 2003).

Multicultural education is largely a “way of thinking and a way of viewing reality” (Banks, 1994, p. 8). It is concerned with theory and practices that reflect tenets of humanism, constructivism, and equity pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Geneva Gay (2004) maintained
that multicultural education is, “integral to improving the academic success of students of Color and preparing all youths for a democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society” (p. 30). She further asserted that it is an integral part of everything that happens in educational spaces and systems. Scholars argue that multicultural education is more than content and curriculum; it includes learning climate, instruction, leadership, evaluation, and policy (Banks, 1994; Bennett, 2003; Gay, 2004; Grant & Gomez, 2000). It is:

An idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school (Banks & Banks, 2001, p.1).

Various typologies have emerged to define and foster multicultural education that embody these visions. Sleeter and Grant’s (1999) typology offers five approaches to multicultural education: (a) teaching the exceptional and culturally different, (b) human relations, (c) single group studies, (d) multicultural education, and (e) education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. Bank (2004) enlisted different ways to enact multicultural education. They are set up as dimensions that include: (a) knowledge construction, (b) content integration, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) empowering school climates and social structures.

**Critical multicultural education.** An explicitly critical slant began to be discernable in studies of multicultural education at the end of the 20th century. Since then, the critical focus is considered by many to be essential to understanding the purpose and urgency of multicultural education (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2002). For example, Sleeter and Grant’s approach to provide an education that is “multicultural and social reconstructionist,” is most closely
aligned to a social justice or critical multicultural approach. In education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist, educators are committed to a more critical and political role of transforming the lives of students in that they engage in working toward the:

- Elimination of oppression, to cultivating students’ sense of hope and agency, to connecting critical pedagogy and Freire’s notion of conscientização to multicultural theories and practices, to teaching resistance and social responsibility, and to enacting a curriculum that privileges knowledge construction, relevance, critical thinking, and democratic practices. (Grant and Gibson, 2011, p. 28)

Multicultural education is also expansive as it includes race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, national origin, immigrants, sexual orientation, age, and disability (Gay, 2004). Likewise, it must permeate all areas of schooling and be characterized by a commitment to social justice and critical approaches to learning awareness of diversity and inequalities within diversity (Nieto, 2009). Multicultural education must also be embedded in sociopolitical contexts and act as “antiracist and basic education for all students” (Nieto, 1999, p.xvii).

In their work on anti-bias multicultural education for all children, but particularly White and middle class children, Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011) aimed to open new conversations that enhance children’s ability to resist and challenge racism in its many forms. They propose seven core learning themes for working with children:

- Develop authentic identities based on personal abilities and interests, family history and culture, rather than on White superiority
- Know, respect, and value the range of diversity of physical and social attributes among White people
- Build the capacity for caring, cooperative, and equitable relationships with others
• Understand, appreciate, and respect differences and similarities beyond their immediate family, neighborhood center/classroom, and racial group

• Learn to identify and challenge stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory practices among themselves and in the immediate environment

• Commit to the ideal that all people have the right to a secure, healthy, comfortable, and sustainable life and that everyone must equitably share the resources of the earth and collaboratively care for them

• Build identities that include anti-bias ideals and possibilities and acquire skills and confidence to work together for social justice in their own classrooms and communities and in the larger society. (pp. 9-10)

Described in the following section, teacher education has been shown to play a role in helping preservice teachers believe in and enact these core learning themes for working with children. Cochran-Smith (2000) suggested that in order for prospective teachers to enhance children’s ability to resist and challenge racism in its many forms, they must themselves engage in similar processes as part of their teacher preparation.

**Multicultural Teacher Education**

In 1976, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) added multicultural education to its standards. This required that institutions seeking accreditation show evidence of multicultural education practice (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Critics consistently claim that nothing much has changed in teacher education programs since then, despite the fact that most teacher education programs report that they have incorporated multicultural perspectives and content into curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Grant & Secada, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996).

**Critiques within teacher education.** Grant and Secada (1990) noted twenty years ago that there was an absence of empirical research on diversity and teacher education. After considering research that has emerged since this claim, Grant and
Gibson (2011) concluded that while the current research base enriches the field and offers a strong anecdotal base for recommended practices and further research, it still does not constitute an empirical research base (p. 22). Empirical studies are important for furthering strides in multicultural teacher education, as they hold potential for dismantling power and dominant thinking that counter aims of multicultural education (Smith & Hodkinson, 2007). Tension continues to exist within teacher education concerning efforts to: (a) restructure teacher education programs to be multicultural, and (b) produce empirical research that challenges dominant ideologies while employing such methods as practitioner inquiry and critical synthesis (Grant & Gibson, 2011).

**Systemic underpreparation for multicultural education.** Literature in the field of education have made it clear that teacher preparation programs do not prepare prospective teachers to work with a diverse range of students and have focused on issues related to this systemic underpreparation (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hess, 2001; Ladson-Billing, 1995; Sleeter, 2001). This systemic underpreparation contributes to what King (2005) refers to as a “crisis in education” (p.46). The underpreparation of teachers to teach ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students is reflected in both the achievement gaps between children of Color and their White peers as well as in the disparate opportunity outcomes for children of Color (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Programs of teacher education often express convictions about closing achievement gaps and lessening disparate opportunity outcomes for children of Color by including statements about multicultural education and social justice in mission statements and on syllabi (Sleeter, 2001). Studies of teacher education programs and
course curriculum have shown that aims and elements of multicultural and social justice teacher education do not always permeate curriculum and administrative actions (Long et al., 2006; Patton, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In teacher education programs that have responded to the critical need to prepare teachers for growing diversity among K-12 students, they have taken an additive approach (Banks, 2004), an approach of adding one or two multicultural courses or courses inclusive of elements of multicultural education (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). While this add-on approach has played an important role in a positive direction for preparing teachers for diversity, there is evidence to show that it does not sufficiently prepare teachers to meet the needs of diverse students (Gay, & Howard, 2000; Nieto, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The few courses that many teacher education programs offer, often reinforce a dominant paradigm that prevails in schools which results in unequal opportunities for children of Color (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Teacher education programs that implement an additive approach often lack depth and consistency which often provide preservice teachers with an unclear framework for understanding multicultural and social justice education (Jay, 2003).

Who teachers are with regard to their ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic background is also crucial. Research shows that the demographic differences between teachers and the children they teach result in different lived experiences, ideologies, and cultural norms (Gay, 1993; Haberman & Post, 1998; Irvine, 2003; Villegas & Clewell, 1998). Teacher educators have demonstrated that prospective teachers lack understandings of current social inequities and often reject information on social inequity and coursework advocating reflection of their roles within it (Haberman, 1991b; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Nieto, 2002; Zeichner, 1993).
Diversity and selectivity for multicultural education. Sleeter (2008) argued that a diverse teaching workforce is more likely than a homogenous one to “bring knowledge of diverse students’ backgrounds, families, communities, and commitment” to serving a range of diverse students (p. 1949). According to Villegas and Irvine (2010), early teacher diversity advocates insisted on a democratic society that was committed to principles of equality (p. 177). Research in teacher education suggests that this research must be directed to promoting the diversity of the teaching force. Promoting the diversity of the teaching force is important to consider because some studies reflect that teacher educators and coursework alone cannot shape beliefs and dispositions or instill attitudes and perspectives that enable teachers from dominant backgrounds to successfully teach all students (Haberman & Post, 1992; and Weiner, 1993). Weiner (1993) further argued that teachers’ backgrounds in regard to race, class, and gender primarily shaped and maintained their perspectives, beliefs, and practices throughout teacher preparation experiences.

As a leading advocate for the recruitment and selection of preservice teachers in teacher education programs, Haberman (1991b) asserted that teacher educators are unlikely to influence the preparation of teachers to work effectively with students in urban poverty unless they are able to recruit “better” teacher candidates. Teacher candidates may already exhibit characteristics or predispositions to multicultural education. Haberman and Post (1998) found this to be true and argued that there were certain characteristics that teacher candidates exemplified that showed a predisposition to multicultural education, but that these characteristics could not be taught through teacher education curriculum. This led them to further argue that “selection is more important
than training” (p. 102); however, the challenge to carefully selecting teacher candidates that exemplify predispositions to equity pedagogy exists in determining the process for identifying the determined attributes believed to contribute to these predispositions. Haberman (1996) observed specific attributes that became predictive criteria for ensuring that preservice students would be able to successfully teach culturally diverse and urban populations, maintaining that these preservice teachers are generally between the ages of 30 and 50, are of Color, are from urban areas, have raised children, have held jobs, and have learned to live normally in a somewhat violent context.

Building from one of Haberman’s (1996) predictive attributes that teachers of Color are more likely to succeed as urban teachers, additional research shows that preservice students of Color are more committed than White students to multicultural teaching, social justice, and providing children of Color with challenging academic curriculum (Ladson-Billing, 1991; Sleeter, 2001). Research on the pedagogy of African American teachers shows teachers of Color teach according to a certain historical and cultural perspective. Irvine (2003) called this the “cultural eye” (p.28) and explained that it represents “culturally specific ways in which African American teachers see themselves” (p. 29) and their African American students. The research suggests that while historical, social, and cultural perspectives can be learned through coursework, ways of being cannot be taught; therefore, in addition to transforming courses and programs, teacher education institutions and educators must work toward increasing efforts to attract prospective teachers of Color.

Gay & Howard (2000) addressed the issue of a high percentage of teachers of Color (many of whom are African American) who will retire and not be replaced due to
the decreasing number of students of Color in teacher education programs. For this reason, they explain that it is even more crucial that teacher education programs teach multicultural education to prepare these prospective teachers to be effective multicultural teachers of ethnically diverse students. Despite the claims that social and cultural ways of being cannot be taught to White preservice teachers, Gay and Howard (2000) responded to multicultural education for the 21st century with suggestions and challenges for multicultural preparation described below. Though they believe it is possible to prepare teachers for multicultural education, they are also well aware of the challenges for effectively preparing teachers to teach children from diverse backgrounds.

**Challenges to effective teacher preparation for diversity.** Learning to teach is a complex sociocultural process that begins in the homes and communities and extends to formal education in school (Hollins, 2011). Knowledge that teachers demonstrate builds upon a socialization process, and as such, reflects the social and political contexts and interests of those in power (Banks, 2001). Hollins (2011) explained that teachers’ knowledge is created within society and “reinforces the prevailing ideologies and social arrangements” (p. 111). According to Helms (1990), this process is grounded in an ideology of power and privilege. Considering these understandings, the assumptions and attitudes preservice teachers demonstrate pose challenges for multicultural teacher preparation and often work to counter the validity and significance of anti-racist and social justice education.

**Lack of cultural identity awareness.** Instructors of multicultural education spend a great deal of time working to persuade students of the significance of culture and ethnicity and the fact that each person has a cultural identity to be valued and respected
(Gay & Howard, 2000). This is a challenge when many European Americans, inclusive of White preservice teachers, often claim to have no culture or ethnicity and hold taken-for-granted assumptions of a White identity that enable European American culture from being contested (Nieto, 1999; Gay & Howard, 2000). According to Social Identity Theory, this White identity is so compelling for people because it represents a dominant and superior social group (Helms, 1990). As such, people tend to identify with social groups they perceive as superior in order to enhance their own self-image (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). The positive aspects of this superior identity are then emphasized and valued while the aspects of other group identities are defined and understood through negative stereotypes (Nesdale, 2008).

Unexamined Whiteness. Studies have shown that White children identify themselves as White, perceive it as normative, and see other groups as distant others (Jordan & Hernandez-Reif, 2009; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). In her study of a particular group of White middle- and upper-middle class prospective teachers’ representations of Whiteness via the use of group collages, McIntyre (2002) found that students constructed and experienced Whiteness as a natural process that often led to “a reification of stereotypes and a privileging of the status quo” (p. 33).

Marx (2004) explained that examinations of White identity and identity development are rare within the context of teacher education. In her experiences with using Whiteness and racial ideology with her White preservice teachers in her teacher education courses, Sleeter (2004) noted that they often employ a discourse of “tenacious resistance” (p. 158). One way preservice teachers resist discussions of race and racial ideology is by using White Talk, which is a “veiled discourse used to circumvent
examination of individual and group roles in the maintenance of racism” (McIntyre, 1997, pp. 124-125). Preservice teachers often evoke evidence that “people are more alike than different” [and] “there are more differences within than among ethnic groups” [and] “regardless of ethnic or racial identity middle and upper class people (especially males) are advantaged over the poor” (Gay and Howard, 2000, p. 4).

**Lack of cultural knowledge and experience.** Studies also show that a large percentage of White preservice students bring very little cross-cultural background, knowledge, and experience to teach children from diverse backgrounds (Gay & Howard, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Villegas and Lucas (2003) addressed the need for aspiring teachers to gain sociocultural consciousness and to “expand their horizons of their perceptions of the world” in order to “learn to see life from the perspectives of their future students” (p.27). They also explained that an initial step in becoming socioculturally conscious entails that preservice teachers acknowledge the differences in society and the fact that they are not neutral as part of this lack of cultural awareness and experience with people of diverse backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, p. 27). In their studies with preservice teachers, Gay and Howard (2000) explained that students often: (a) express fears of engaging with different racial and ethnic groups; (b) deny the verity of ethnic and cultural diversity in teaching and learning; and (c) show reluctance to confront issues of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

**Deficit perspectives.** Another barrier that surfaces when teacher educators engage students in examining their social identity is students’ perceptions of their identity as normative. When students understand their ways of being and doing as normative, that means that they understand others’ ways of being as less than desirable or not normal
Studies confirm that even after some coursework in multicultural education, preservice teachers have negative beliefs and low expectations of success for students of Color (Gay & Howard, 2000; Irvine, 2002). When working with children of Color, preservice teachers often demonstrate the inability to highlight the positive aspects of the children’s identities or acknowledge them as capable and knowledgeable learners (López-Robertson, et al., 2010; Sleeter, 2001; Tatum, 2007). Although the phenomenon of deficit thinking has been extensively documented (Delpit, 1995; García & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997), there are few studies of the transformation process of additive views - broadened views of what children know and are able to do - and even fewer empirical research of the deconstruction of deficit thinking (Hernández-Sheets, 2003). Research on preservice students’ experiences in culturally diverse schools and classrooms reflects that their experiences in these schools and classrooms often end up doing more harm than good as they reinforce negative stereotypes (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Wiggins, Follo, and Eberly, 2007).

A prime force in projecting deficit perspectives to the public are mass media, which have contributed significantly to the “corpus of American thinking, feeling acting in the realm of diversity” (Cortéz, 2000, p. 69). According to Bartolome and Macedo (1997), “the popular press and mass media educate more people about issues regarding ethnicity and race than all other sources of education to U.S. citizens” (p. 223). This media education indoctrinates ideologies that falsify and distort realities about racial and ethnic groups and reinforces deficit perspectives of those groups (Macedo, 2006) by continuously constructing and presenting often stereotypical, distorted, and incorrect information about and images of people of Color. These images, thoughts, feelings, and
actions are portrayed through mass media and transmitted to students in teacher education programs on a daily basis. These deficit views disseminated by media negatively influence students’ values and attitudes and shape and reinforce their expectations of people of Color (Corté, 2000), which then contributes to students’ fear of diversity and resistance to confronting race and racism. The media’s ability to further influence students’ deficit perspectives has strong implications and become problematic for successful efforts in multicultural education and K-12 instruction, because teachers carry with them these programmed, preconceived notions about diversity that conflict with and present barriers to multicultural teacher preparation (Gay & Howard, 2000).

**Competing teacher education reforms.** Contributing to these tensions within multicultural teacher education are the competing landscapes of teacher education reform and the demands for teacher education programs to provide evidence of their success in preparing teachers to teach all students. Reform agendas speak to the critiques and challenges of multicultural education and teacher preparation. According to Zeichner (2003), there are three major agendas for reform in teacher education that either contribute to, strengthen, or pose challenges for the future of multicultural teacher education programs. These include: (a) Professionalization Agenda, (b) Deregulation Agenda, and (c) Social Justice Agenda. Though these three agendas share goals for providing a high quality, democratic education for all students, they propose very different solutions to narrowing the achievement gaps in U.S. public schools (Zeichner, 2003). Cochran-Smith (2003) projects three situations that have the most bearing on how and why we stand at the crossroads of multicultural teacher education for the 21st century. They are: (a) the changing demographic profile of U.S. education for teachers and
students, (b) competing and highly politicized agenda for reform of teacher education, and (c) devastating challenges to the research base that supports university-based teacher preparation. Given these projections, it is important to examine Zeichner’s (2003) three major historical reform agendas in teacher education to better understand the critiques and challenges for preparing teachers to teach all students for diversity and within the context of a diversity society.

**Professionalization Reform Agenda.** The Professionalized Agenda, also known as the Regulatory Agenda (by its critics), evolved from NCTAF reports in 1996 and 1997 as well as by other developments by the Holmes Group and partnership, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Curriculum (INTASC), and National Council for Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE). This reform represents a means to establish a profession of teaching to standardize the training of teachers, by determining a specific knowledge and skill base. This reform agenda is commonly referred to as performance standards-based teacher education (Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2002). In the 20th century, the dominant reform was performance-based teacher education. The result of this reform were national attempts to replace course completion as the basis of licensure with a system set up to assess teachers’ knowledge and performances. According to Zeichner (2003), contemporary teacher standards attend to cognitive, dispositional, and technical aspects of teaching and the validity of standards are developed by a committee of scholars and practitioners and asserted based on the judgements of panels of experts (p. 498).

One main argument Zeichner (2003) provided to show a defense of the Professionalization Agenda is that raising standards for teaching and teacher education
can diminish inequities and injustices in the education system. What followed were attempts to raise the status of teaching as a profession with strategies such as putting an end to aggressive teacher recruitment for high need areas and the issuing of alternative routes to teacher licensure (Haberman, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999a). Some of the positive results of the Professionalized Agenda include the focus on addressing the issue of cultural bias in the performance-assessment of teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1999a). A negative result of this reform movement is that standards developed to foster instructional strategies representing culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) are not incorporating what is known about using content knowledge to promote pupil understanding and achievement. The second negative result is that narrowly defined standards in teacher education has had an adverse effect on programs being able to accept a range of diverse, prospective teachers. The issue has not changed since 1993 when Haberman wrote that selectivity of teachers was as important as preparation to ensure that teachers could teach in diverse settings. Teacher education programs continue to rely on culturally biased academic criteria and teacher assessment that often creates barriers for teachers of Color. A third negative result of the Professionalization Agenda is the high cost of implementing the reform. The current implementation of the new performance-based assessment in pre-service teacher education is making demands on university education faculty and institutions, as they are being asked to write performance indicators and rubrics and to examine their courses to ensure that they are covering state content examinations (Zeichner, 2003).

*The Deregulation Reform Agenda.* According to Zeichner (2003), a second kind of reform for teacher education is called the Deregulation Agenda which is also described
as the Reformist or Common Sense Agenda. It is consistent with market-based reforms in the business world that aim to create various entry ways that people might enter into the teaching profession (Cochran-Smith, 2005). The Fordham Foundation and other conservative groups and foundations have presented this reform in direct opposition to the Professionalization Reform Agenda. The argument of those supporting the Deregulation Agenda is that the professionalization and embedded teaching standards used to assess teachers are ineffective. Deregulation advocates argue that what is learned through teacher education coursework can be learned through an apprenticeship and that “there is no reliable link between pedagogical training and classroom success” (Fordham Foundation, 1999, p. 6). The deregulationists want teacher education to be like charter and private schools in which hiring and firing are dependent on students’ test scores (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

There are various tensions created by the Deregulation Reform Agenda. The first is the attack deregulationists have made on what they describe as the constructivist and multicultural bias in teacher education curriculum. Advocates of the Deregulation Agenda claim that teacher education curriculum is “indoctrinating students into student-centered teaching methods, of being against high educational standards, and of being overly concerned with political correctness” (Zeichner, 2003, p. 504). Another tension created by the Deregulation Agenda is that there are major flaws in their arguments to offer alternative routes to certification like various kinds of for-profit programs and those based on the use of distance technologies. In November of 2001, educator, political scientist, and author, Frederick Hess called for a radical overhaul of teacher certification, claiming that “no state makes clear what teachers need to learn in teacher education.
courses or ensures that teachers have acquired essential knowledge or skills” (p.x). Zeichner (2003) countered this argument by claiming that teacher educators, many affiliated with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, are developing performance-based assessments linked to state standards for teacher education that consider learning centered approaches to teaching and the development of intercultural sensitivities and competencies. A third tension created by this agenda is its uncritical advocacy for opening alternative routes into certification. Cochran-Smith (2005) called this a “tightly regulated deregulation,” which means that alternative routes with few requirements make entry into teaching wide open, while centralized, federal control diminishes state- and local- level decisions and greatly prescribes discretion and autonomy” (p. 13).

The Social Justice Reform Agenda. The third reform, centered on the preparation of teachers for cultural diversity, is the Social Justice Reform Agenda. Such organizations as American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and Association of Teacher Educators have produced work to move this agenda forward. The Social Justice Agenda evolved from the Social Reconstructionist reform in teacher education. Both agendas see teacher education as a crucial element of making society more just. Zeichner (2003) claimed that a great deal has been learned through both research and instructional strategies “associated with successful teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse schools and about teacher strategies that are effective in preparing teachers to become culturally responsive teachers” (p. 507) despite the lack of infusion of multicultural and social reconstructionist perspectives in pre-service teacher education programs. Much research has contributed to the knowledge base of successful teaching
in diverse schools (CREDE, 2002; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Moll & Vellez Ibanez, 1992; Nieto, 2000; and Villegas & Lucas, 2002). However, the same scholars emphasize that these elements of pedagogy are rarely reflected in descriptions for teaching standards. Advocates of the Social Justice Reform Agenda have worked within the guidelines set by traditional university-based programs while also implementing high-quality alternative certification programs, such as the Dewitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund’s Pathways to Teaching Careers and the University of Southern California’s Latino Teacher Project (Haberman, 1999; Villegas & Clewell, 1998).

There are also limitations of this reform agenda. One limitation suggested by Zeichner (2003) is that the Social Justice Agenda has been done only at the level of teacher education classrooms and aimed at preparing more culturally responsive teachers. It does not address larger contexts of teacher education. It must be broader to address not only social justice perspectives but the professional structure of teaching and teacher education, including ways in which students were selected into teacher education programs and the larger program and institutional contexts in which the programs were embedded. A second limitation is the lack of embedding teacher education students into diverse communities in which Zeichner (2003) explained, is not a common practice within teacher education. A third limitation of the Social Justice Reform Agenda is that it is focused primarily on the transformation of White, monolingual, English speaking teachers rather than the transformation of all teachers to teach all students. According to Zeichner (2003), the “task of teacher education for diversity needs to be reframed to one of preparing all teachers to teach all students, and the particular needs of prospective teachers of Color need to be better addressed in teacher education programs” (p. 511).
Critical Sociocultural Theory

Critical sociocultural theory extends the tenets of sociocultural theory but it also makes explicit issues of power and disempowerment that many scholars have considered to have been implicit in sociocultural theory all along. As such, it is important to understand the perspectives of a sociocultural theory on learning. Lev Vygotsky (1978), a Soviet psychologist, initiated ideas that led to the dominant view of sociocultural theory in the 20th century when he suggested that learning is social and cultural in nature and that those elements influence the cognitive. A sociocultural view of learning is also rooted in the studies of psychology and anthropology (Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2004) and integrates developmental, cognitive, and cross-cultural psychology with cultural, social and cognitive anthropology while borrowing from linguistics, history, and philosophy (Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2004; Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007). For example, anthropologically, a sociocultural theory on learning seeks to understand culture as ways in which people view the world and behave in it (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). This requires a view of culture as not “static, deterministic, or predictive” (Irvine, 2003, p.7), but as a “framework through which actions are filtered or checked as individuals go about their daily lives” (Hanson, 1992, p.3). Nieto (2009) described a sociocultural view of learning that “emerges from the social, cultural, and political spaces in which they take place and through interactions and relationships that occur between learners and teachers” (p. 5). Irvine explained that culture plays a powerful force to influence students’ predisposition toward learning, and while cultural behaviors are learned behaviors, they can also be unlearned and modified (Irvine, 2003). Since culture is
Creating, socially constructed, learned, and dialectical (Nieto, 1999), sociocultural theory is rooted in sociocultural and constructivist theories of knowing and learning.

Sociocultural theory also embodies a social constructivist epistemology or a theory of knowing that emphasizes knowledge as “actively constructed by the learner as he/she reorganizes prior knowledge in the light of new experiences” (Harrington & Enochs, 2009, p.48). Social constructivist theory views meaning and new understandings as “jointly constructed … both within the same time and place (e.g., peers in a classroom) and across time and space (e.g., prior actions and decisions made by others)” (Gallego, 2001, p. 315). Both theories and perspectives view learning as socially situated within culture, yet continually evolving into new ways of understanding the world. Learners acquire knowledge and arrive at new understandings by using cultural tools, symbols, texts, and ways of thinking, in an active process of “meaning making and reality construction” (Bruner, 1996, p. 20). Sociocultural perspectives seek to understand and accept the multiple ways of being in the world, validate children’s and families’ cultural and social domains, and gain insights from socially mediated literacies in and beyond schools.

**The critical in sociocultural theory.** Critical ideas about sociocultural theory take these concepts into the political realm, which lead teachers and researchers on a journey of examining and challenging the status-quo and power structures within the social and cultural contexts of their own and their students’ lives (Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007). A critical sociocultural perspective brings about awareness of the intersections of language, literacy, and culture and sheds light on a richer picture of
learning, especially for students whose identities are related to language, race, ethnicity, and immigration status and have traditionally had a low status in society (Nieto, 2002).

A critical sociocultural perspective draws on multiple theories, such as critical race, post structural, cultural, feminist, and discourse theories, each in some way focused on challenged and unjust status quo. Critical sociocultural teaching practices draw on home and community resources, including “funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. 72) emphasizing that learning that occurs in homes and communities are valid sources of knowledge in the lives of all children (Long & Volk, 2010). Nieto (2002) focuses on five concepts that weave together sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives to form a framework for critical sociocultural perspectives. I added the concepts of syncretism to the list to discuss sociocultural and critical theories as related to understandings about: (a) agency/co-constructed learning (b) experience and cultural capital (c) identity/hybridity; (d) syncretism, (e) context/situatedness/positionality; and community. These five concepts reflect learning perspectives that engage critical thinking. Understandings of these concepts as part of a critical framework support the development of critical pedagogies.

**Co-constructed learning and agency.** Sociocultural theory serves many purposes one of which is to challenge views of teaching as the reproduction of socially sanctioned knowledge or “official knowledge” (Apple, 1991, p. 65), or the knowledge that the dominant elements of society (in the U.S., typically White, middle class) deem as basic and most valuable for functioning in society. Freire (1970) called this type of education “banking education” (p. 72), as educators attempt to deposit knowledge into students who are viewed as empty receptacles. However, Dewey (1916) stated as early as the
beginning of the 20th century that “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and ‘being told’ but an active and constructive process, yet it is a principle almost generally violated in practice as conceded in theory” (p.38). This dominant culture/socially sanctioned knowledge and type of pedagogy still exists in schools and classrooms (Nieto, 2002) and yet children outside this narrow cultural norm are regularly underserved in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Sociocultural and sociopolitical theories emphasize a different type of learning, one in which knowledge is co-constructed between teacher and students as students engage in active processes of reflecting, theorizing, and creating knowledge within contexts purposeful to the students. Freire (1985) described this as learning that did not involve consuming ideas, but rather of “creating and re-creating them” (p.4). This type of pedagogy involves a focus on mutual discovery by teachers and students and reflective questions that “invite students to consider different options, to question taken-for-granted truths, and to delve more deeply into problems” (Nieto, 2000, p. 8). Learning that is co-constructed provides pathways to discovering and enacting agency to make change in one’s life (Nieto, 2002).

Experience and cultural capital. Sociocultural and sociopolitical theories support learning built from experience grounded in the belief that the experiences children have in their families and communities, their previous experiences within institutions, such as schools, as well as the larger social and political frameworks in which they have operated, shape who they are and how they interact with others in social situations (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). This becomes problematic in schooling for children who attend schools that perpetuate narrow visions of what constitutes the norm
but have been raised in environments reflective of cultural, linguistic or ethnic groups other than those who hold power in defining that norm (Delpit, 1988). These children have cultural capital that is helpful in some contexts but not typically in school contexts. This is what Peirre Bourdieu (1986) described as tangibles within cultures, like experiences, knowledge, values, behaviors, tastes, language, and dialect, that have more worth in dominant society over others. Nieto (2009) argued that educators with critical sociocultural perspectives on learning need to acknowledge power relations as central in society and educational spaces and recognize and value the cultural capital students bring to school. In his outline of the characteristics of critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) argued that if students are not able to “transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing” (p. 19).

**Identity/Hybridity.** Critical sociocultural theory seeks to understand students’ cultural identities. As such, it is important to understand theories and perspectives on identity development. Identity is shaped by how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it. Vygotsky (1978) addressed aspects of identity development when he explained how individuals internalize practices, knowledge of, and beliefs about the world and themselves in the process of learning and social interaction. Identities are fluid and change as a person learns new things. They tend to shift, as a person encounters new material within a particular context that challenges previous social and cultural beliefs (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). Identities are also multiple and fluid, enacted and achieved according to social context, with power playing a crucial role in what identities get
recognized, enacted, and legitimated (Gee, 1999). As identities develop, they position us in relation to power. Johnson (2011) described a dynamic relation between people and social systems and explained that through it we develop “a sense of personal identity that includes gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, disability status, and sexual orientation—and how that identity positions us in relation to other people, especially in terms of inequalities of power” (pp.78-79).

In this way, identity is also viewed as embedded in culture. Nieto (2002) maintained that everyone has a culture because “all people participate in the world through social and political relationships informed by history as well as by race, ethnicity, language, social class, sexual orientation, gender, and other circumstances related to identity and experience” (p. 10). And like identity, culture is dynamic, multifaceted, active, and changing while always influenced by social, economic, and political factors (Nieto, 1999). Hybridity as part of identity means that culture is heterogeneous and complex but that “assimilation or cultural preservation are not the only alternatives” (Nieto, 2002, p. 13). Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejada (1999) described hybridity of identities and explained how “competing discourses and positionings transform conflict and difference into rich zones of collaboration and learning” (p. 286) within a third space.

**Syncretism.** Anthropologists initially used the term Syncretism, to describe the merging of practices to create new religious forms, as they studied Caribbean cultures’ newly developed, religious practices – namely African Americans who had converted to European Christianity (Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). Syncretism, over time, took on a broader meaning as a, “creative process in which people reinvent culture as they draw on
diverse resources, both familiar and new” (p.4). Unlike hybridity that places greater emphasis on the product or new forms created, Syncretism emphasizes “transformative, inventive practices of the participants with the focus on processes that emphasize intentionality and expertise of children and adults as they bring multiple bodies of knowledge together through creative acts of mind” (Long, Volk, Tisdale, & Baines, 2013, p. 5). Syncretism deepens understandings of the ways that children draw on multiple cultural and linguistic experiences to create mutually supportive spaces for teaching and learning (Long & Volk, 2009), and as such, it is a significant aspect of sociocultural theory and a natural element of cross-cultural experiences and negotiations.

**Context/Situatedness/Positionality.** Just as it is important to understand identity as embedded in culture, it is also important to understand the notion that the construction of reality is also situated within a cultural context where environment and purpose help shape meanings (Au, 1998). This is especially important for understanding the role of critical pedagogy. Sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives have “shattered the perception that teaching and learning are neutral processes uncontaminated by the idiosyncrasies of particular contexts” (Nieto, 2002, p. 15). Teaching and learning is situated in and shaped by historical, social, and political contexts. Shor (1992) warned of the dangers in curriculum that claims to be politically neutral by not questioning school and society. He explained that this type of curriculum “cut off the students’ development as critical thinkers about their world” (p. 12). Since teaching and learning is affected by context, situatedness, and positionality, it can serve to “repress, dominate, and disempower language and literacy users whose practices differ from the norm that establishes it” (Corson, 1993). The preservice teachers within this study demonstrate, in
their critical identity reflections, ways in which they are positioned by their various social identities (some including gender, culture, race, sexuality, social class, and/or religion) with regard to context and situatedness.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy engages students in enacting the principles of multicultural education (outlined in the previous section) through dialogue and reflexive praxis. Freire (1970) defined education as dialogue between persons engaged in “united reflection and action” (p. 88) to name the world in terms of power structures related to issues of oppression, a tenet of what is more recently called critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2006). Critical pedagogy is described as “an act of creation and re-creation” (Freire, p.89) through reflection and action, focused on challenging injustices, yet not possible without love (Kincheloe, 2010). This love that Freire described as part of pedagogy is “compassionate, erotic, creative, sensual, and informed” and increases “our capacity to love, to bring the power of love to our everyday lives and social institutions, and to rethink reason in a humane and interconnected manner” (p. 9). Critical pedagogy aims to help teacher educators and teachers restructure and/or construct their work so it facilitates the liberation and empowerment to all students (Kincheloe, 2008). The characteristics of critical pedagogy are seen as essential to transformative teaching and learning, as they support critical reflection and action to identify and challenge forms of oppression and injustices in society.

**Characteristics of critical pedagogy.** A central aspect of critical pedagogy involves studying students to learn new and better ways to teach them. Critical pedagogy encourages teachers to learn about their students and to uncover generative themes within
their developing knowledge of students and their sociocultural backgrounds (Souto-Manning, 2009). Critical practitioners come to understand how students make sense of their world and what students find meaningful in order to construct pedagogies that move them to learn and identify what they want to know (Kincheloe, 2008). As part of critical pedagogy, teachers must engage students in dialogue to question existing knowledge and problematize traditional power relations that have served to marginalize specific groups and individuals (Kincheloe, et al, 2011). Given these foundational ideas, Kincheloe (2008) highlighted basic characteristics of critical pedagogy that I relate specifically to this study. He wrote that critical pedagogy is:

- Grounded on the social and educational vision of social justice
- Constructed on the belief that education is inherently political
- Dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering
- Concerned that good schools don’t hurt students - good schools don’t blame students for their failures or strip students of the knowledge they bring to the classroom
- Centered on the notion that teachers should be researchers - here teachers learn to produce and teach students to produce their own knowledge
- Grounded on the notion that teachers become researchers of their students - as researchers, teachers study their students, their backgrounds, and the forces that shape them
- Concerned with “the margins” of society, the experiences and needs of the individuals faced with oppression and subjugation. (p. 10)

Critical pedagogy is understood to be focused on the cultivation of a critical consciousness. Freire (1978) labeled this cultivation “conscientization…[a process by which] humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled” (p. 109). In this movement from naïveté to critical pedagogy,
Kincheloe (2004) wrote that teachers and students work toward experiences through which they come to: (a) grasp social, political, economic, and cultural contradiction that subvert learning; (b) pull back from their lived reality as to gain a new vantage point on who they are and how they came to be this way; and (c) keep insights in mind as they return to the complex processes of living critically and engaging the world in ways such a consciousness requires. West (1990) referred to this unveiling as a demystification process or a way of unveiling the complex dynamics of power structures to reveal possibilities for transformative praxis.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Teacher Education**

Critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy often intersect and work in tandem to support liberation and social justice education. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) focuses on practices that prepare all teachers to work effectively with all children and to empower them intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically, by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). It attends to funds of knowledge (Moll, Veléz-Ibañéz, & Greenburg, 1989) and discourses of (Gee, 1990) of youths’ home, communities (ethnic, racial, and geographic), and cultures (ethnic, youth, popular, school, and classroom, and discipline-specific) (Ladson-Billing, 2004). Studies have shown that cultural knowledge and practice of many students, most often children of Color and English language learners, go unrecognized or dismissed in schools and teaching practices (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billing, 2009; Nieto, 1999; Valdes, 2001). Culturally responsive pedagogy aims to increase achievement, critical consciousness, and
knowledge of self and culture (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992a). Gay (2010) identifies six descriptive characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy:

1. **CRP is validating** - It acknowledges, bridges, and teaches from the cultural heritages and language(s) of students using a variety of culturally-engrained instructional strategies (p. 31).

2. **CRP is comprehensive** - It makes students feel part of a collective effort to advance cultural and academic success (p. 32).

3. **CRP is multidimensional** - It draws on the collaborative work on studying cultural heritage in the context of all curricular disciplines (p. 34).

4. **CRP is empowering** - It raises students’ morale through providing resources and assistance, develops an “ethos of achievement” and praises accomplishments (p. 35).

5. **CRP is transformative** - It focuses on “transcending cultural hegemony” while simultaneously developing social consciousness, critical thinking skills, and “political and personal efficacy” (p. 37).

6. **CRP is emancipatory** - It “releases the intellect of students of Color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing” (p. 37).

**Characteristics of culturally relevant teachers.** Many have written of what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways (e.g., Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Villegas Lucas, 2002). These educators and researchers agree about the need for culturally relevant teachers to: (a) hold high expectations; (b) value families’ and students’ ways of being; (c) create contexts where all voices are provided an opportunity to be heard; (d) create classroom ecologies that care and respect the student, regardless of background; and (e) use what is learned about students’ biographies to plan lessons that are meaningful to the learner (Herrera, 2010). Specifically, Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (2009) studies of successful teachers of children of Color and their classroom practices,
reflect a range of important characteristics of culturally relevant teaching. These teachers:

- have high self-esteem and a high regard for others
- see themselves as part of the community, see teaching as giving back, and encourage their students to do the same
- see teaching as an art and themselves as artists
- believe that all students can succeed
- help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities
- see teaching as ‘digging knowledge out’ of students
- see teacher-student relationship as fluid
- see teacher-student relationship as cultivated beyond the classroom
- encourage a community of learners
- encourage collaborative or communal learning
- view knowledge as something that is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared
- are passionate about knowledge
- help students develop necessary skills
- see excellence as a complex standard that accounts for student diversity and individual differences (pp. 37-84)

**Educating culturally responsive teachers.** The final body of literature reviewed in this chapter examines efforts toward preparing preservice teachers to teach all children. The field makes explicit that the most cited reasons for placing emphasis on preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching refer to diversity, particularly in regard to race and culture, and they are: (a) the demographic imperative (Darling-Hammond &
Bransford, 2005; Nieto, 2009) represented by the racially and linguistically diverse society of the United States (Gay & Howard, 2000) and the monoracial teaching force, and (b) the so-called achievement gap between students of Color and White students in this country (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The multicultural education movement, which began more than thirty years ago, called for better preparation of teachers to work in diverse communities (Banks, 1994, 1998; Banks & Banks, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto, 1999). This movement has supported teaching for social justice, multicultural/critical multicultural education, and culturally relevant teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Sleeter, 2001). Darling Hammond & Bransford (2005) explained that programs of teacher education typically tend to focus on building content knowledge, teaching pedagogy, developing social abilities, and providing positive clinical and/or field experiences. Colleges of Education that work from strong and consistent theoretical paradigms are most likely to accomplish this; however, these paradigms must also be supported by learning communities with coaching teachers and administrators who share theoretical frames (Holmes Group, 1986; Kitchen & Stevens, 2008). Researchers have shared that experiences working in diverse communities accompanied by reflective practice is one component of these learning communities that is often lacking in teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Picower, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Two approaches are presented for preparing teachers for CRT: (a) the infusion approach and (b) field experiences in culturally relevant teacher education.
**An infusion approach.** Geneva Gay (2010) calls for an infusion model of teacher preparation that embodies both multicultural and social justice principles. In this model, multicultural attitudes and social justice tenets are infused throughout all courses and field experiences within teacher education programs (Gay, 1997, 2010). In her review of research on multicultural education coursework with a field experience, Sleeter (2001) explained that all studies described conceptual growth among the students and greater willingness among many to consider working in an urban school. Considering this infusion model, Sleeter (2008) recommended that teacher education programs be founded on three pillars: (a) preparation for everyday realities and complexities of schools and classrooms, (b) content knowledge and professional theoretical knowledge that universities can provide, and (c) dialogue with communities in which schools are situated.

**Field experiences in culturally relevant teacher education.** Programs of teacher education have been shown to be most effective when a consistent conceptual framework permeates courses, field experiences, and school placements (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Teacher educators who engage preservice students in learning about other cultures advocate that they focus on cultural knowledge (Banks, 2004; Irvine, 2003). This is often a challenge because preservice teachers tend to essentialize cultures and cultural difference in the process of getting to know students from diverse backgrounds (Haberman, 1991a; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Grant and Gibson (2011) explain that preservice students need to see examinations of culture woven throughout teacher education programs and not as solitary examinations within few courses.
One way that teacher educators have engaged preservice teachers in learning about children’s cultures is through cross-cultural and community-based field experiences (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Cross-cultural, community-based field experiences can provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to develop greater intercultural teaching competence (Zeichner, 1999). Pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs with strong beliefs and values about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000), and these beliefs are unlikely to change unless students are offered experiences that “challenge their validity” (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987, p. 264). Cross-cultural, community-based field experiences are important because they offer opportunities for students to disrupt their biases and challenge deficit thinking (Sleeter, 2008).

Studies of cross-cultural, community-based learning in teacher education illustrate how this type of learning provides a basis for culturally relevant teaching practices (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Bondy & Davis, 2000; James & Haig-Brown, 2002; Melnick & Zeichner, 1996). It gives pre-service teachers insight into children’s lives outside of school (Sleeter, 2008) and reinforces the view that pre-service teachers need to learn how to access and learn about family and community members and various other resources in their student’s communities. According to Oakes, Franke, Hunter Quartz, and Rogers (2006) and their work with Centre X, an urban teacher education programme at UCLA, pre-service teachers’ experiences in communities can help them expand their idea of expert to include parents and community members.

Studies of community-based teacher education also reflect that prospective teachers learn from the expertise within the community to be better teachers of children.
from those communities (e.g., Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008; Sleeter, 2008; Melnick & Zeichner, 1996). Seidle and Friend’s (2002) study demonstrates deep learning about culture, teaching, and expertise in the community through their case study of a partnership linking pre-service teachers at the Ohio State University with an African American church in the community. Studies also demonstrate that mediated, community-based field experiences have a powerful impact on teacher education and pre-service teachers’ awareness of students different from themselves when they are linked to coursework focusing on diversity (Brown, 2004; Coffey, 2010; Lopéz-Robertson, Long, Turner-Nash, 2010; Wiggins & Eberly, 2007).

There are studies, however, that found that cross-cultural, community-based field experiences reinforced or produced more stereotypic attitudes (Haberman & Post, 1992; Reed, 1993). Even with multicultural coursework guiding field experiences, students had more negative descriptions of the children with whom they worked after their experiences in community-based sites. Most studies on cross-cultural, community-based field experiences have focused on students’ experiences in community-based sites and not as much on the teacher educator’s and community members’ experiences as part of the meaning making process. Zeichner (2010) addressed the transformation of teacher education by stating that the new form of teacher education required in the U.S. to support the development of more democratic forms of professionalism in teaching and teacher education must “lead to a greater democratization of knowledge in teacher education programs and to the building of strong alliances across boundaries of universities, schools, and communities that are less hierarchical and more inclusive of the expertise that exists in all three spheres” (p. 1550). Cross-cultural, community-based
field experiences constitute one way that teacher education programs can cross boundaries of universities and communities. However, research has shown that when students are engaged in these field experiences without reflective coursework and supervision to help scaffold their experiences, the experiences often end up reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions (Zeichner, 1995).

**Reflexive praxis.** Teacher educators suggest that preservice teachers examine and analyze structural inequality and then examine how these forms of inequality are reproduced in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teacher educators advocate examinations of systemic discrimination and the social context of schooling (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2002). As part of the reflective coursework necessary for countering stereotypes and misconceptions, it is important for preservice teachers to examine their own identities in regard to culture and schooling (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Another aspect that is essential for preparing preservice teachers to work with a range of diverse learners is the promotion of a reflective approach to teaching that can improve practice and further social and cultural awareness, justice, and equity (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). This is most successfully achieved when there are reflective communities of practice in place. These communities of practice are partnerships between universities, schools, and communities in which educators reflect together on how to best educate children (Sleeter, 2001). These reflective communities of practice can occur through various school-based and community-based field experiences.

Teacher educators must take responsibility for providing opportunities for preservice teachers to learn how to be agents of change through reflexive praxis.
One part of reflective practice within multicultural courses that include community-based field experiences, involves reflecting on race and racism; however, studies reflect difficulty in assisting White students to deal with guilt felt over historical and institutional racism and past personal actions and experiences (Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe & Steinburg, 2000; and Tatum, 1994). Others in the field, (Britzman, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 2000; and Sleeter, 1992) have identified and reflected on their own racist thinking, actions, and teaching practices and argued that this is a necessary step to attempting to unlearn them. Sharing attempts to unlearn racism with others opens us up to the “susceptibility of misinterpretation and misrepresentation, multiple layers of contradiction, and competing perspectives, and personal exposures” (Cochran-Smith, 2000, p. 158).

The Role of Narrative in the Education of Teachers

Preservice teachers come into teaching with beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge shaped by numerous sources like race, gender, class, personal values, and cultural and educational traditions (Gay, 2004). This is an important understanding for Sleeter’s (1994) work that for decades has pointed toward the ways that teachers interpret events in their learning and teaching efforts with students and in their instructional decisions with the knowledge and beliefs they carry with them. Thus, narrative inquiry and analysis becomes a critical practice in the education of preservice teachers when preservice teachers are able to critically reflect on their experiences while taking into account the multiple and overlapping social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which they teach and learn (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Nieto, 2002; Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000). Scholars and teacher educators encourage preservice teachers to critically reflect on their
experiences and argue that beginning teachers can come to better understand aspects of their practices, identify the difference between themselves and their students, and offer interpretations of challenges they may encounter in their classrooms (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000; Gomez & Abt-Perkins, 1995).

**Narrative, identity, and belief.** A challenge in preparing preservice teachers is in helping them to broaden their belief systems, particularly in relation to cultural and social issues and social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billing, 1995). Narrative works as a practice to encourage and engage preservice teachers to reflect on their identities and the various factors (beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge shaped by numerous sources like race, gender, class, personal values, and cultural and educational traditions) that make up their identity and shape their perspectives on teaching. Nieto (2000) argued that teachers need to recover, face, and accept their identities, while they also reconstruct them to better meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. When preservice teachers share their narratives with others, they are more likely to examine their identities and see themselves in new ways.

Cochran-Smith (2000) emphasized first-person reading and writing accounts as “starting points for interrogating unexamined assumptions and practices” and when shared in a classroom evokes a “shared vulnerability that helps a group of loosely connected individuals gel into a community committed to issues dealing with race more openly” (p. 171). Roger, Marshall, and Tyson (2006) drew on the work of teacher education and literacy, community service learning, and narrative teacher research to explore the discourses of students’ stories and the mediated authoring of professional identities in relation to literacy, schooling, and diversity. They argued that engaging
students in narrative dialogues, while immersing them in community literacy sites, broadens teacher educators’ and preservice teachers’ understandings of the complex issues of language, literacy, diversity, and social justice. Narratives created, shared, and examined have the power to support deeper understandings of culturally responsive teaching.

**Narrative and becoming culturally responsive.** Narrative inquiry and analysis is recognized as critical to pre-service and practicing teachers unlearning epistemological systems, beliefs, or teaching practices that may lead into racist or discriminatory practices (Cochran & Lytle, 2009). For example, in *Teaching through the Storm*, Hankins (2003) discussed the power of memoir for dissecting her ideological frame of reference for teaching. Her narrative reflections of interactions and conversations in school and out of school with students and families helped her become more aware of her deficit attitudes toward her students, their families, and their ways of being. In her reflexive writing process, she was able to reconsider her perspectives about difference to ones that are more inclusive and that capitalize on students strengths. Cochran-Smith (2000) explored and wrote about unlearning racism in teaching and teacher education through narrative. In it, she was able to interrogate her assumptions and better understand how they are embedded and replicated in the teaching of courses and curriculum. Lessons she learned in the process of her narrative are highlighted as follows:

Personal and fictional stories about race and racism that we invite participants to read and write break down the barriers of distanced, academic discourse and make possible revelations about participants’ positions, identity, and standpoint. Stories can serve as touchstones for shared experiences and commitment. As one primary way we understand and construct our professional lives and our multiple, stories can help scrutinize our own work and theorize our own experience. (p. 185)
Narratives are also seen to be foundational to critical pedagogy. They are reflections or realities that act as a “cultural rope that connects people across generations” (Duncan, 2005, p. 201). Critical race theorists emphasize storytelling, particularly the uses of counter-narratives to alter the differential of privilege and provide more opportunities to privilege the voices of people of Color (Bell, 1995; Delgado, 2000). Sharing stories of the oppressed is believed to have the potential for fostering societal transformation (Duncan, 2005; Freire, 1970). Duncan (2005) further emphasized aesthetic and emotional dimensions of the stories of the oppressed to “stimulate the imagination and to inspire empathy to allow others to imagine the mind of the oppressed and to see, and perhaps vicariously experience, the world through their eyes” (p. 201). Stories of oppressed people bring societal oppression and injustices to the surface for all to see (Friere, 2004).

Many have written about what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways (Edwards, 2010; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McIntyre, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). These scholars agree that culturally responsive teaching is that which holds high expectations for every student, values families’ and students’ ways of being as well as heritage knowledge, creates contexts where all voices are provided opportunities to be heard, creates respectful and caring classroom communities, and uses what is learned from students’ stories to plan lessons that are meaningful to them. Narrative and story is seen as a critical practice/strategy in culturally responsive teaching and learning because it acts as a means for students to draw on cultural and linguistic knowledge through speaking, writing, and reading. Allen and Alexander (2012) used narrative inquiry with students and invited them to explore critical issues within their
lives, such as their rights to health and well-being, an adequate standard of living, or culture, identity, and freedom of thought. Herrera (2010) used biography-driven instruction to better understand and help culturally and linguistically diverse learners’ utilize their knowledge and the contexts in which they live in school. The use of narrative and story can help teachers learn about their students, “their lives, backgrounds, passions, and struggles…[and provide information that can become a source to be] harnessed for literacy instruction” (McIntyre, 2011, p. 2). As such, field experiences often provide opportunities to learn about students and their families and communities though narrative.

**Field experiences and narrative.** Field experiences within communities and schools have been a part of the education of teachers for some time. Critical reflection during these experiences helps preservice teachers make sense of field experiences. Reflective activities, often through narratives, help preservice teachers become knowledgeable and sensitive to the values, lifestyles, and cultures of others (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). It is through guided reflection and mediated and co-constructed narratives between teacher educator, preservice teachers, and children, family, and community members that preservice teachers can begin to understand oppression and equity and to build a commitment to act as agents of change (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Coffey’s (2010) study of preservice teachers who participated in community-based field experiences revealed that the field experiences and the use of narrative inquiry provided preservice teachers with better understandings of how to interact and communicate with children in multiple and diverse contexts and opportunities to learn about children’s values, knowledge, and talents. Another study of teachers and preservice teachers who spent time getting to know children and their families in and out
of school and engaged in critical and narrative reflections throughout their experiences, found that teachers and preservice teachers were able to gain an appreciation of the rich resources, expertise, and knowledge to counter their prior assumptions and single stories of children and families from diverse backgrounds (Lopéz-Robertson, Long, and Turner-Nash, 2010).

**Narrative and fostering community in teacher education.** Ladson-Billings (2009) highlighted various ways that teachers use narrative and story to form a community of learners in culturally responsive classrooms. She called this developing a “people identity” (p. 75). One way she suggested to do this is by involving students in sharing stories about their lives outside of school and for teachers to engage in conversations with students and families at community functions or inside the homes of students to get to know students and families better. Researchers in teacher education see this as important to consider when preparing new teachers – using narratives to provide preservice teachers opportunities to gain insights into their own identities, beliefs systems, and teaching perceptions (Nieto, 2005; Sleeter, 2004). This has been shown to lead to a sense of community in which preservice teachers feel comfortable to discuss such issues in relation to cultural and social issues and social justice (Coffey, 2010; McIntyre, 2002). Gay (2010) suggested that, if preservice teachers do not feel comfortable with others in the classroom, discussions expose them to feelings of vulnerability or silence multiple voices. Much work tells us that only stories from the dominant culture are likely to be voiced in environments in which students do not feel comfortable sharing their stories, environments in which their social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are not valued or included (Allen & Alexander, 2013; Bull, 2008;
Cochran-Smith, 2000; Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Researchers also demonstrate that experiences in which stories from dominant cultures are exclusively voiced may impede preservice teachers’ processes of growth toward gaining sociocultural consciousness and understandings of equity practices (Cochran-Smith, 2000), because these experiences prevent the voicing of counter narratives needed in classrooms to provide stories and life experiences different from those of dominant, mainstream culture (Gay, 2004). Work in this area also urges teacher educators to consider that though preservice teachers may voice broadened perspectives of cultural and social issues and social justice in the classroom, they may not fully understand these perspectives or live them in practice with children from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

**Conclusion to Chapter Two**

I entered this study with the belief that the five bodies of research and practice described in this chapter would serve as an important foundation for planning and teaching this course in teacher education. Though research on multicultural education and multicultural teacher education provided a base from which to build my study, critical sociocultural perspectives in particular shed light on possibilities for a richer picture of learning in teacher education (Nieto, 2002), and for engaging preservice teachers in beginning to attend closely to the issues of power, identity, and agency in their teaching (Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007). Critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy represented the translation of theory into practice and provided techniques and insights from which I built curriculum for this course.
Reviewing these bodies of work also helped me find gaps in the field in which my work is situated in addition to informing the design, implementation, and analysis of data in this study. Additionally, this work helped me navigate data and negotiate multiple meanings that I constructed through the intersection of this theoretical and empirical grounding, particularly with regard to: (a) examining identity, Whiteness, and racism; and (b) developing insights about the need for critical, culturally responsive, and equity pedagogies. Finally, this literature review provides an expanded view of the theoretical contexts for this study including the methodological aspects of my work which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER THREE
BACKGROUND, PILOT STUDY, AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological design of this study which was conducted as I planned for, taught, and reflected on a one-credit undergraduate education course, EDTE 400 *Learning through Community Service* which included a 20-hour community-based/service component which I call, *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. Pseudonyms are used for all schools, community housing areas, family and community members, and students in this study. I will preface this description of methodology with a look at the history of the course and my association with it followed by a description of the pilot study conducted immediately prior to and informing this dissertation work. Those sections are followed by a detailed discussion of the research design and methods.

**History of EDTE 400**

This dissertation study as well as the pilot study preceding it were conducted in the context of a one-credit undergraduate education course taught at the University of South Carolina’s main campus. In order to understand the research contexts, it is necessary to provide an explanation of the history of this course and the literacy program that provided a field experience for students taking the course as well as my involvement in the course and its redesign.
The Course

Listed on the master schedules of courses as Learning through Community Service, EDTE 400 is a one-credit, undergraduate education course offered through the University of South Carolina’s main campus in Columbia, South Carolina. At the time of both the pilot and dissertation studies, EDTE 400 was a required course for students planning to enter elementary, middle, or secondary education programs of study. Six sections of EDTE 400 were offered each fall and spring semester. The course involved (typically freshman and sophomore) students meeting for class sessions on campus six times for 75 minute sessions throughout the semester in addition to serving at least 20 hours of volunteer work in community education settings (hence the course title, Learning through Community Service). Undergraduate students enrolled in EDTE 400 were provided with a list of potential community education sites at an orientation scheduled before the start of the semester. A brief description was provided for each site. Students were able to choose three sites in which they wished to serve their community/service hours and were assigned to one of those sites by the course site coordinator, often receiving their first choice. Typically, each of three instructors taught two sections of the course, meeting with 20-25 students in each section. Site coordinators organized the off-campus component of the course.

Hired to Teach the Course

In 2010, I was hired as the instructor for all six sections of EDTE 400. Prior to taking on this role, I met with the three professors and the off-site coordinator who had organized and taught the course and the community/service component in previous years. They shared their understanding of the course structure as well as their syllabus and
course assignments. One professor explained that the course structure and the two main assignments - a service learning notebook (turned in as a hard copy within a three-ring binder) and an end-of-course presentation - had remained the same for 10 years. All materials (two VHS tapes about service learning and service learning as a route to reform and school improvement) were given to me to use.

At the time I was offered the opportunity to teach the course, the chair and assistant chair of the teacher education department explained their hope that the new instructor of the course would restructure it to better fit the needs of prospective teachers. I briefly shared my vision of what I would do differently as the instructor of the course. I would: (a) examine the service learning/community sites that had been compiled on the list, possibly adding new sites; (b) create curriculum that provided a framework for students to think about the significance of service learning education/the community component; and (c) provide assignments that involved critical reflection of service experiences and learning through service. Once I was offered the contract to teach EDTE 400, the department chair explained that I could restructure the course and wished me the best in my efforts. I would serve as course instructor for the on-campus component and a site coordinator would organize and facilitate the off-campus community service component.

**Restructuring the Course**

Influenced by my life’s experiences and my doctoral studies, I set off to restructure EDTE 400 by first reviewing doctoral course syllabi of all of the classes I had taken up to that point and reflecting on my most significant learning experiences within these courses. I listed texts and activities that might be useful for EDTE 400.
Recognizing that this might be the only opportunity for these students to learn about critical and sociocultural perspectives, my ambitious goal was to think of a way to fit highlights of my doctoral program into this one-credit, service learning course by providing simplified versions of and starting points for engaging students in self-reflexive practices and thinking about being culturally sensitive and responsive to children from diverse backgrounds.

I started with the first course I took, EDRD 800 (Literacy Education P-12) as I remember it as one of the most significant courses for shaping my perspectives in the beginning stages. I remembered Chimimanda Adichie’s (2002) speech, “The Danger of a Single Story” as having an impact on my thinking about people from diverse backgrounds and countries. I previewed the speech again and decided that it may be appropriate learning material for undergraduate students in EDTE 400. I also knew that I wanted to engage students in identity reflections or reflections of self. I pulled out an article that was listed on Blackboard for EDTE 400 but that we did not read. It was entitled, “Identity Matters” (McCarthey & Moje, 2002), in which authors discussed their perspectives on why literacy matters in education contexts, particularly literacy classrooms. I also remembered reading an article on social identity formation and socialization (Harro, 2002) in a Multicultural Education course I took as an elective towards the end of my doctoral coursework. This course provided a multicultural framework and a more detailed overview of culturally responsive pedagogy. I was somewhat familiar with the content, but only because some of it had been touched on in some of my other doctoral classes and I saw those ideas as the most significant learning from those classes. I considered the multicultural course as an essential course that
influenced the rest of my doctoral coursework. As such, I borrowed a few components from the Multicultural Education course as I planned for EDTE 400: Harro’s (2002) article on socialization and basic definitions of culturally responsive pedagogy and counter-narratives. I created the identity narrative assignment after reading Harro’s article.

Another article from my readings that reflected elements of culturally responsive pedagogy and counter-narratives was titled, “Five Steps in Constructing Counter-Narratives of Young Children and Their Families” (Lopéz-Robertson, Long, and Turner-Nash, 2010). While highlighting significant points of process from this article, I realized that I wanted to engage students in similar steps (getting to know children and families outside of school) and in the construction of counter-narratives to refute typical deficit narratives about children of Color and children from low income households. As a result, I designed a process for students to be engaged in a particular community setting and to reflect on their observations and experiences in hopes that they would be able to construct counter narratives that would contradict prevailing deficit views of the African American children with whom they would work in a low income housing project setting. I did this by revising the course to include new questions to guide students’ reflections in their service learning/community engagement journals. I also redesigned the journal to be a blog assignment in which preservice teachers would blog online about their observations and reflections. I wanted to engage students in ethnographic-like inquiry while influencing their observations and reflections with wording and questions reflective of culturally sensitive and responsive pedagogy. I also created a new end-of-course presentation assignment which involved preservice teachers in a less formal service
learning sharing – presentations - (Appendix F), in which they were asked to orally present their observations and counter narratives.

As I started to design the syllabus for the course, I outlined it with the learning processes in mind that I hoped students would experience in EDTE 400 (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1- Learning Processes Envisioned for EDTE 400

While I knew it would be a challenge to accomplish this even in a three-credit course, it was my hope that I could somehow condense this learning process - a process that I believed to be highly significant for undergraduates at an early stage of their thinking about a career in education – into a one-credit course. I hoped that the students would engage in a transformative learning process through EDTE 400. I was at the least confident that they would gain more from it than I had gained through my education prior to my doctoral program. Since this was a one-credit course with a required 20 hours of service in the community, I needed to be careful not to assign too many readings or
assignments. Outside of the fact that I would likely receive complaints by students about too much coursework, I believed that fewer and more critical readings and assignments would be more effective for students to gain insights from this course. Each assignment was closely aligned with readings and service experiences and I developed the assignments specifically to further their understandings about theories presented within the readings. Though I felt that I was on the right track in how I restructured this one-credit course envisioning it a starting point for engaging students in self-reflection and thinking about issues of inequity, the course was under consideration as a course worthy of standing alone within education programs (elementary, middle, and secondary levels) and, at that time, there were no subsequent courses in the students’ programs that built from (carried forward) the ideologies that I would present in it.

The following fall, the second year I taught EDTE 400, I met with two professors who wanted to hear how I had restructured the course. After I provided an explanation, they expressed some disagreement about EDTE 400: one professor argued that my curriculum was important and that the refreshed version of EDTE 400 was a valuable one-credit experience and should be included in the elementary, middle, and secondary education programs; the other professor felt that EDTE 400 was still not valuable and wanted to omit it as a required course for the degree program he represented. His preference was to add the field-based component of EDTE 400 to an existing three-credit course. He was careful to assure me that his motivation to omit EDTE 400 had nothing to do with how I had restructured it. As a result, in the fall of 2012, EDTE 400 was continued as a required course for the program area represented by the first faculty member (secondary level) and was discontinued by two other programs.
Adding *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners as a Service/Community Option*

When I taught EDTE 400 for the first semester (the year prior to my dissertation study), my role was strictly as the academic instructor, with little input or responsibility regarding the service/community component. After listening to and reading students’ reflections about their experiences in their service learning sites, however, I felt a disconnect between the academic portion of the course and the field experience component. I became concerned that my role as the academic instructor was limited and that I needed to also have a role in a service learning/community site component to better understand the dynamics and possibilities of the course. I was also interested in guiding or supporting preservice teachers in their experiences within the sites according to the critical sociocultural theoretical framework I was trying to convey in the course. As a result, I decided to develop a community site option that would, in many ways, parallel my experience with my friend Tracy and her program, *Freedom Readers*.

**Tracy’s *Freedom Readers*.** Mentioned in Chapter One, the inspiration for my restructuring of one option for the service learning/community engagement component of the course came about as a result of my summer of 2010 participation as a literacy tutor in my friend Tracy’s program, *Freedom Readers*. This was a non-profit organization developed by Tracy and supported by individual members of her church. Although not considered a faith-based organization, members of her church acted as volunteers and provided portions of financial support for the program. The pastor of the church was also involved in *Freedom Readers*, acting as a Board of Directors member and helping to facilitate social gatherings and meetings in support of *Freedom Readers* at the church. Tracy’s *Freedom Readers* program was developed to involve adult tutors pairing with
children ages 5-13 (referred to as young scholars) reading together and working on literacy skills.

I enjoyed my experiences as a volunteer in this program for many reasons, but what most resonated with me was that it was situated in the children’s community, a low-income housing area where the residents were primarily African American. This meant that tutors had to engage with children and families on their turf rather than in the confines of a school building, an element of the teaching/learning process supported heavily by many in the field of sociocultural and culturally relevant pedagogies (López-Robertson, Long, & Turner-Nash, 2010).

**My participation in Tracy’s Freedom Readers.** I started commuting with Tracy during spring semester 2010 to take classes at the University of South Carolina and that is when she told me about *Freedom Readers* and the vision she had for it. That semester was the first time *Freedom Readers* had been in session. I was inspired by her efforts and vision and told her that I would love to participate in it. I started volunteering that summer as a reading tutor at the *Freedom Readers* site in Conway, South Carolina (Horry County), the second time it was in session. The summer session took place in the community center of a government housing development called Dresden Heights. I tutored a young boy named Hakeem. We read together, worked on vocabulary, writing, and oral presentations. We often took walks or read outside of the community center. As we walked, Hakeem showed me where he played, where he lived, and where some friends and relatives lived. He introduced me to his grandmother who lived in one of the apartment units. This was one of the most enjoyable and informative experiences I had participating in *Freedom Readers*. I learned that Hakeem had friends and family living
near him in the same community. They seemed like a close niche and Hakeem seemed excited to introduce me to everyone. When I met his grandmother, she told me how proud she was of Hakeem for participating in Freedom Readers and doing well in school.

Tracy knew I valued the community walk and asked if I would write a blog entry about the day which she posted on the Freedom Readers’ website (“Freedom Readers,” Freedomreaders.org.). I began to think about the fact that this type of community site and experience was not available for students in EDTE 400. I believed that preservice teachers could greatly benefit from getting to know children in sites such as the community where Freedom Readers was held that summer.

**Planting the seed for a Freedom Readers in Columbia.** One day, when Tracy and I were headed back to Myrtle Beach from our university classes, I asked Tracy to share her process of envisioning and starting the first Freedom Readers site. She went through, in detail, all of the steps she had taken to achieve it including contacting government housing properties and speaking to residence managers there. She said that they were excited to have an afterschool literacy program and that they would be there for each session and would communicate with the residents about the program. But this first attempt did not turn out as well as Tracy expected; the residence managers were not able to be involved or present at any of the sessions. As a result, she took responsibility for contacting the residents, getting a key for the community center, and addressing any issues that arose. She said it was difficult to get Freedom Readers started but that it was set up and children were attending. She was excited to see the program take form.

During this same car ride, I began talking with Tracy about EDTE 400 and the list of sites provided for the community/service component (Appendix L) explaining that
there were no site options in children’s housing communities. Most of the sites were either programs in schools or programs set up in businesses, community buildings, or churches. I asked Tracy about what it might take to establish a *Freedom Readers* site near the university inviting EDTE 400 students to be the reading tutors. She thought that was a great idea and suggested that I set up a site and lead it. I immediately replied, “I don’t think I can do that.” She said, “Sure you can!” and offered to come with me to meet the resident manager and discuss implementing the program when I found a site.

**My initial thoughts about leading a Freedom Readers.** Even with Tracy’s support, I was still unsure and uncomfortable about setting up and leading a *Freedom Readers* in Columbia. I wondered what it was going to be like as a White person going into a low-income housing development to set up a literacy program to work with children of Color. I knew I might be viewed as someone who saw herself as a Great White Hope and I also did not want to be the White person who thinks she knows what is best for the children with whom I had no prior interaction and no common racial, cultural, political, or heritage background. I was motivated and excited to do it however, because I wanted EDTE 400 students to work closely with children of Color and on the children’s home turf while I supported them in recognizing equity issues in their own dispositions/biases about children from backgrounds different from their own. I already knew, from my experience in Tracy’s *Freedom Readers*, that this experience could offer opportunities to learn from children and families rather than simply transmit information to them. Without romanticizing or generalizing, I wanted them to see that the children were capable, knowledgeable, and motivated and that the places in which they live include people who love, care about, and support them.
The process of setting up a *Freedom Readers*. I began the process of setting up a *Freedom Readers* site by looking up the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) properties in and around Columbia, South Carolina. These are public properties that receive federal aid to provide decent and safe housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. When I called Ivy Village Apartments, the residence manager, Ms. Bea, answered the phone. As I explained my idea of the literacy program, she expressed interest in meeting with me. She said a couple of times how amazing it was that I called that day, since she had just been talking with her manager about trying to get a literacy program set up for the children there. We exchanged email addresses and began arranging a date when we could meet in person.

**Meeting Ms. Bea.** On November 6th 2010, Tracy and I met Ms. Bea for the first time at the community center and office at Ivy Village Apartments in a suburb of Columbia, South Carolina. After we explained the mission and structure of *Freedom Readers*, Ms. Bea said that she was interested in having the program there for spring of 2011. She said that she would share the description and information about *Freedom Readers* with families at their next residents’ meeting and begin a sign-up sheet. I told her I anticipated having 15 EDTE 400 students volunteer as literacy partners, so she decided to allow the first 15 children who signed up to participate. Ms. Bea suggested various ideas for the first meeting between the university students and the children as well as for the following sessions. Tracy and I left that day feeling very comfortable and excited about Ms. Bea and the opportunity to have a *Freedom Readers* at Ivy Village.

Later that night, Ms. Bea sent us an email, and it read:

> Good Evening Ladies,  
> It was a privilege to meet with you both on today. I look forward to our
continual communication. Below you will find some targeted areas we discussed:
(1) Parents and tutors meeting - Tuesday, January 25, 2011 (tutors to arrive @
3:30, parents and students @ 4:00pm - 4:30pm - no later than 5pm)
(2) No more than 15 students to sign up (will contact Lisa @ the end of business
day on January 10, 2011 w/ total number of participants)
(3) Parent form will be sent by email to me for parents to fill out prior to meeting
Thank you again ladies,
Bea

This email reassured me that Ms. Bea was going to be involved in helping with Freedom
Readers. I started to become even more hopeful about coordinating this literacy program
that would involve the children of Ivy Village with some of my EDTE 400 students. Ms.
Bea and I continued to plan (through email correspondence) for the first meeting with the
children, families, and USC students that would take place on January 25, 2011. At this
point, the program at Ivy Village would be planned as another site in Tracy’s program
even though Ms. Bea and I would take primary responsibility for it.

*Freedom Readers Literacy Partners takes shape.* During this process of
planning with Ms. Bea, Tracy spoke with her Freedom Readers’ Board of Directors
about including Ivy Village as a possible site. However, while the board members said
that I was welcome to use the name Freedom Readers and any documents or ideas from
the program, they were unable to provide funds or legal representation. I told Tracy that I
understood their decisions and that I would be fine running a site on my own in
collaboration with Ms. Bea. I was grateful that I had learned from Tracy and my
experiences as a tutor with Freedom Readers. I considered the opportunity to develop
my own program, inspired by Tracy and Freedom Readers, as an honor and privilege. So
I named my program, Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, in honor of Tracy’s program.

As plans began to move forward, Ms. Bea periodically sent me the growing list
of children who were signing up for the spring sessions of Freedom Readers Literacy
Partners. Closer to the January 25th, I sent Ms. Bea a copy of the documents that I would distribute to the families during the first meeting with families. The documents (Appendix A) consisted of: (a) a parent handout that described the mission, vision, goals, description; and (b) a set of rules and expectations for Freedom Readers Literacy Partners.

Partners. Ms. Bea replied with the following message:

Good morning Lisa,
I left a message on your voicemail last evening. I have reviewed the attachment, and there are several changes that I have made. I believe that things are a little different due to the fact that you and Tracy are used to being in communities where there is not an employee present during your presentation time. But I have stated what our policies are in red that will indicate how our community is run and how we can better partner together. Look forward to seeing you this evening and I will be in the office up until that time.
Bea

I read through Ms. Bea’s comments that suggested changes to the handout with regard to the time, expectations, and rules (Appendix H) and made all of the adjustments to the handout to reflect the policies of Ms. Bea’s community center.

During this time, I also collected site preference lists from students enrolled in EDTE 400 for spring semester 2011. These forms asked each student to rank their preferences from a list of 51 service learning/community engagement sites. Fifteen of the students ranked Freedom Readers Literacy Partners as one of their site choices. Those 15 students and I met with the children and families of Ivy Village for the first session of the first year of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners on January 25, 2011. At the same time, I decided that this experience might hold potential for my eventual doctoral dissertation so I made plans to conduct a pilot study of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners during that spring semester (2011). The pilot study is described in detail in the next section of this chapter.
Pilot Study

The first semester that I incorporated *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* into the EDTE 400 curriculum, I conducted a pilot study to gain insights for what would become the more in-depth and purposeful dissertation study. The pilot study asked the following questions:

- What observations develop from preservice teachers’ field experiences and engagements as literacy partners within this particular community setting?
- How do these preservice teachers interpret field observations and experiences through their roles as researchers and learners?
- How do preservice students’ interpretations of their community-based experiences lend insight into the education culturally responsive teachers?

The pilot study took place from January, 2011 to April, 2011, in the context of EDTE 400. Most of the students enrolled in this course were pre-education candidates deciding whether or not education was the field they would eventually select. Of the 124 students enrolled in EDTE 400, approximately 85% were White females and 10% were White males. Only about 5% consisted of other races – primarily females.

As a requirement for EDTE 400, the students were asked to serve 20 hours working with children in a community site. *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* at Ivy Village apartments was one of the options for the community component of the course. I served as the site coordinator for that site. Thus, I was responsible for teaching the six-sections of the on-campus component of EDTE 400 at the university - with approximately 20 students in each class - during six 75-minute sessions and I was responsible for guiding the 20-hour community site component for the students who selected *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* as their community service option. As the site coordinator, I was responsible for designing the program activities and for
communicating program guidelines and concerns with preservice teachers and the residence manager and parents of the children at the community site. I also often discussed aspects of and experiences in the program with preservice teachers, children and their parents, and the residence manager on site.

The Freedom Readers Literacy Partners community site option was situated in the community center and office of a low-income, housing development about 12 miles from the university. At the site, participants (the university students, 14 of whom were White) partnered with children ages 5-13, all of whom were African American, reading or interacting with a child for 90 minutes each week and engaging in various literacy-based activities provided by me in our course syllabus. Participants also received written documents explaining the vision, mission, and goals of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners (Appendix A) and these descriptions were verbally communicated to preservice participants prior to their first class session.

**Course content.** To initiate the course, I introduced topics of identity development and the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy. The class read articles pertaining to identity, socialization, cross-cultural, community-based experiences, and culturally relevant pedagogy (listed on the syllabus in Appendix C). They viewed a video of a speech by a Nigerian novelist, Chimimanda Adichie (2002) about the danger of forming single stories of persons based on stereotypes and misperceptions (Adichie, 2002). They wrote their own identity narrative in which they described how they had been socialized within their own specific social identities, such as their gender, race, and religious background. They also wrote reflections throughout their service experiences
regarding what they were learning about themselves and about the children with whom they partnered.

**Data collection.** I conducted semi-structured, 30-45 minute interviews with each of nine participants during which I asked them to share background information and their lives and experiences and asked them questions about their: (a) expectation of being literacy partners prior to service; (b) their interpretations of their experiences during the sessions, and (c) their learning about their experiences with regard to future teaching. I collected copies of students’ reflections about their readings and experiences, kept field notes in my weekly journal where I recorded my thoughts about participants’ responses or descriptions of their beliefs or site experiences as well as their interactions with the children and community members within the site. I analyzed all data by conducting a thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to construct themes or categories that seemed prevalent and then created vignettes to systematically organize and articulate patterns that were constructed.

**Findings.** Pilot study findings demonstrated that these preservice teachers were initially skeptical of the children’s reading abilities and their willingness to partner with college students to engage in any activities. They expected that the children would be indifferent to reading or would be struggling readers. In the beginning of the community-based experience, some participants were uncertain about their positioning as literacy partners. The source of their uncertainty stemmed from their inability to negotiate the meaning of *literacy partner* through the descriptions provided prior to their first visit to the community site. Participants had a difficult time seeing themselves as partners with children with regard to achieving the literacy goals of the course (see the goals in
Appendix A) and considered themselves to be the literacy experts in the partnerships. Some participants were confident that they would be a “positive role model” for the children, meaning that they thought the children would then have someone to look up to who exemplified positive characteristics.

Pilot study findings also demonstrated that participants appeared to begin countering their prior deficit perspectives of children and families through their experiences as literacy partners. These findings were constructed by contrasting preservice teachers’ written observations and reflections about their experiences and developing relationships with children and families in the community: (a) initial assumptions of the children and their families - were contrasted with- (b) descriptions about what they said they learned about the children’s and their families’ interests, literacy strengths and abilities, joys, interests, and dreams. Participants were able to identify commonalities and differences they noticed between their own experiences and those of the children; however, they were unable to articulate their understandings of those differences. For example, when one preservice teacher was working with her nine-year-old literacy partner on an activity requiring them to write about one of their most memorable moments in life, they chose to write about vacations with their families. The preservice teacher wrote about flying on an airplane, going to another state, and staying in a beach house with her family. Her partner wrote about staying in a hotel with her family for one weekend in the same town in which they lived. The preservice teacher wrote that she did not realize that her partner’s experience would ever be considered a vacation, and she was not able to expand on reflections to further understand the reason for why they had different experiences with vacations. Another example was when one
preservice teacher drew on her own background knowledge of The Coliseum in Rome, Italy, a place she had visited, and Ancient Roman events in The Coliseum to help her partner make a connection to the text, *The Hunger Games*. This preservice teacher could not understand how her 13-year-old partner had no background knowledge of The Coliseum in Rome. Her reflection of this event stopped at that point of not understanding; she did not question her own lack of insights. It seemed clear to me, although not explored by the student or by me in response, that this was indicative of not only different life’s experiences but a result of societal and systemic inequities including social class injustices.

**Implications for dissertation research.** Findings from the pilot study provided insights that supported the development of the more systematic, focused research project described in this dissertation. I found that: (a) the EDTE 400 assignments and my role in class discussions were not as effective as I had hoped for helping students understand their experiences within diverse community settings; so, in preparation for the dissertation study, I changed or added elements of assignments and I made the decision to become more vocal about systemic inequities during discussions that would take place the semester of dissertation data collection; (b) preservice participants of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* were not as prepared for and did not receive as much mentoring by me during their experiences as literacy partners; so to prepare for the dissertation semester, I planned for better preparing participants for their experiences as literacy partners and to be better mentors during the orientation meeting; (c) data collected from focus group interviews were not useful in understanding participants’ perspectives on culture and race and ethnicity or experiences with people from diverse
backgrounds; so, for the dissertation, new small group interview questions were designed to engage participants in deeper articulations of their own cultural and racial identities, their experiences with people from diverse backgrounds, and their current or developing perspectives; (d) the pilot study did not involve in-depth data analysis due to insufficient data collected and less effective methodology choices; therefore, methodology used within the dissertation -autoethnographic and narrative methodologies - were chosen to explore participants’ understandings of self and experiences in more depth.

**Implications for EDTE 400.** Findings from the pilot study also informed my revision of curriculum for EDTE 400. Some of the pedagogical (curricular) insights I gained in conducting the pilot study included recognizing that I needed to consider the following when attempting to support preservice teachers in developing a critical stance and countering deficit views of children and families: (a) the need for me and the students to delve deeper into understanding our identities, positionality, and socialization; (b) ways for us to discuss understandings of and experiences with diversity or with individuals from backgrounds different from our own; (c) my ability- as the teacher educator- to counter students’ perspectives that reflect status quo thinking or racist or discriminatory viewpoints; and (d) my ability to present and explore topics such as hegemony, White privilege, oppression, and racism. These findings were reflected in changes made to the course syllabus with regard to assignments, content of class discussions influenced by instruction and voicing of my theoretical stance, and restructuring of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* engagements.
The Dissertation Study: Methodology

Guided by data from the pilot study, I developed the design for the study that is the focus of this dissertation. The research questions I asked were:

- What do preservice teachers learn from a one-credit hour undergraduate course developed to support preservice teachers in understanding the need for more equitable literacy practices and, in the process, to promote positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities in a low-income, African-American community?

- What specific elements of the course were supportive of teacher candidates’ learning; what elements impeded learning or were not supportive?

- What can we learn about my role as the course instructor in fostering undergraduates’ learning?

- What can I learn about the growth and development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness in the process of this study?

Data were collected from January through April 2012, during the third semester that I taught EDTE 400 and the second semester that I engaged students in the Ivy Village community site. To answer my research questions, I used qualitative methodologies drawing, in particular, from the basic tenets of critical ethnographic methods with a heavy emphasis on narrative inquiry. My research design is outlined in the following pages prefaced by a description of my methodological stance and an introduction to my roles, background, beliefs, and biases as the researcher and as a participant in the study.

Rationale and Methodological Stance

Qualitative research is the process of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. This type of inquiry is used to gain insight into people’s attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures, and lifestyles. Qualitative researchers are
intrigued with the complexity of social interactions and seek to understand the process of meaning making and experiences within their social worlds (Merriam, 1988). Engaging in these qualitative methods enabled me to explore my own processes as well as experiences and reflections of the teacher candidates engaged in both contexts.

Specifically, I was intrigued by the complexity of social interactions that occurred in a particular cross-cultural, community-based setting in which White preservice teachers would be involved one-to-one with African American children. I sought to understand the process by which preservice teachers interpreted their experiences and how they made meaning through them. The process of creating contexts for my students to interact with the children combined with the process of helping them examine their perspectives also placed my personal process of meaning making at the center of the research. Thus, because the overarching purpose of my inquiry was to understand how to better prepare pre-service teachers to teach children from diverse cultures and backgrounds by understanding their experiences and my own experiences during an undergraduate course that included a community service component, qualitative methodology provided the greatest potential for answering my research questions.

**Philosophical stances.** Qualitative researchers embark on their research process with assumptions that represent a particular philosophical stance, paradigm, or worldview. Guba (1990) defined a paradigm or worldview as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 17). Qualitative researchers bring with them a set of beliefs and worldviews that shape their understandings, and these beliefs continually evolve over time and throughout the research process. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers may use multiple paradigms that are compatible to their research.
The beliefs and understandings that I carry with me fall under two paradigms: social constructivism and advocacy/participatory theories.

**Social constructivism.** According to this worldview, researchers seek understanding of the world in which they live and develop subjective meanings of their experiences in it. Qualitative researchers who hold this philosophical stance look for the complexity rather than the narrowness within meanings because multiple and varied meanings naturally develop. Questions developed in this stance are broad and engage participants in constructing meaning as well. Constructivist researchers often address the processes of interactions between individuals (Creswell, 2007). They also acknowledge that their personal, cultural, and historical backgrounds and experiences shape their interpretations of their research.

**Advocacy/participatory.** The basic tenet of this worldview is that the research contains an action agenda. Creswell (2007) described this action agenda as reform that “may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives” (p. 23). An advocacy/participatory paradigm focuses on the issues that marginalized groups face, such as issues of hegemony, oppression, and inequity.

These philosophical stances reflect the purpose and process of my research. I constructed meanings via my personal processes and experiences separate from and in conjunction with my participants’ processes and experiences as we engaged in a particular community-based setting.
Methodological Approaches

The specific qualitative approaches used for my dissertation study were narrative inquiry and autoethnography. I believe these approaches provide opportunities to extrapolate rich insights about participants’ processes and interpretations of their experiences and perspectives.

Narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry and analysis are often used to examine the relationship between preservice teachers and their teaching experience by using biographically oriented techniques (Alsup, 2006; Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000). One way that instructional choices and perspectives of preservice teachers can be understood is through teachers’ life stories (Johnson, 2007). For this reason, Carter (1996) argued that it is imperative “to place biography at the center of teaching practice, the study of teachers, and the teacher education process” (p. 120). Investigations into preservice teachers’ and practicing teachers’ narratives highlight stories of prospective teachers as sites of theorizing and for making sense of teaching (Connelly, 1988; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Richie and Wilson (2000) argued that there are many elements involved in becoming a teacher:

Becoming a teacher is an ongoing process of negotiation and struggle among various narratives - narratives as scripts from teachers’ histories in gender, social class, and racial, ethnic, and family groups; multiple and often conflicting conceptions of teaching and education in our popular culture; and the stories surrounding teaching and learning that pre-service teachers have posed from years of experience in education institutions. (p. 75)

Narrative inquiry has been shown to be useful in illuminating preservice teachers’ processes as well as in understanding the contexts in which preservice teachers have been socialized and educated (Gomez, Walker, & Page, 2000). Preservice teachers’ stories can reveal aspects of their identities that often impede their ability to be more culturally
sensitive and responsive to students. This information can help teacher educators become better equipped to be able to develop curriculum and instruction that draws on preservice teachers’ knowledge and experiences (Johnson, 2007).

In my study, I used tenets of narrative inquiry by engaging preservice teachers and myself in identity reflections, field observations and other reflections (in which they reflected on their experiences and interactions with the children and their families), and service learning shares (in which they crafted counter narratives of the children with whom they partnered). The completed assignments were later collected as data. Informal conversations and small group conversations with participants were also recorded and collected as data. In these recordings, participants shared stories of their past experiences and learning processes. Though data collected in this study reflect narratives, I also used narrative coding and analysis of them to construct patterns or themes that led me to the study’s findings. These narrative elements of the study are described in detail later in this chapter.

**Autoethnography.** Autoethnography is a methodological approach stemming from ethnography and life histories (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The key characteristic is that an insider provides an account of the ways of doing or being within a setting or culture. Since its introduction, autoethnography as a method has expanded to include various research approaches and techniques such as personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989), and reflective ethnographies (Ellis and Bochner, 1996), to name a few. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), autoethnography is a genre of writing and research that displays “multiple levels of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p.739). Reed-Danahay (1997) defined autoethnography as a form of “self-narrative that
places the self within social contexts” (p. 9). Autoethnographers also use various lenses, “first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

Anderson (2006) discussed analytic autoethnography, which is considered realist and more objective in nature, and identified five key features: (a) complete member researcher status; (b) analytic reflexivity; (c) narrative visibility; (d) dialogue with informants; and (e) commitment to theoretical analysis. These five features highlight possible strengths of autoethnographic research. One challenge of autoethnographic research is attaining complete member research status. Attaining member research status is important to lessening the researcher’s distorted reality of the experience and further separate the autoethnographer from the other participants (Anderson, 2006). Member checking is one way to do this to ensure that the autoethnographer’s interpretations are not affected by “multiple foci” (p. 380) of the study. When attaining insider status as an autoethnographer, it is important to understand that interpretations of these events and interactions vary depending on the researcher’s position. Even cultural realities and interpretations of events among individuals in the same group are highly variable (Hayano, 1979). This is important to recognize as autoethnographers analyze events and interpretations as group members with multiple identities, positions, and foci of interests and understanding.

Reflexivity is an essential component of autoethnography. Davies (1999) explained that “reflexivity expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection
to research situation and hence their effects upon it” (p. 7) Reflexivity expresses the researcher’s awareness of reciprocity between the researcher, the setting and contexts, and the participants or group members. Anderson (2006) maintained that reflexivity entails “self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand self and others through examining one’s actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with others” (p. 382).

According to Denzin (1989), the goal of Autoethnography is to gain cultural understandings that underly autobiographical experiences. As such, autoethnography entails processes of data collection, analysis, and reporting similar to that used in ethnographic research. Collection of field data often occur through participation, self-observations, interviews, and document reviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Autoethnographers observe their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors while engaging in participant-observation (Deck, 1990). Field journals may be used to document observations. Another significant data collection technique used is interviewing. Interviews often work to confirm, complement, or dispute internal data generated from recollection and reflection (Ellis, 2004).

In my study, I used the methods of autoethnography in the following ways: I was a participant-observer within the community-based field experience and engaged in reflections not only about the students’ experiences by about my reactions to them and about my own process of learning and growth; I kept a field journal in which I recorded observations, posed questions, and reflected on my developing understandings in the course and field experience, and told stories of experiences and interactions with participants and children and families within the community; I recorded conversations I
had with participants as they influenced my own process of making meaning; I engaged in reflexivity; and I was aware of reciprocity between myself, the setting and contexts, and the participants and children and families in the community. Perhaps most important to the autoethnographic element in this study was my engagement in the in-depth study of my own identity socialization history and the impact of that history on my work as a teacher educator in this course and as related to the students’ recorded socialization histories. Thus, this study has distinctly autoethnographic elements as it uses an ethnographic lens to focus on the outward social and cultural aspects of my personal experiences while also looking inward exposing my vulnerability through analysis and interpretations.

**Participants**

**Primary participants.** The primary participants in this study were me (the teacher educator who taught EDTE 400) and the eight preservice teachers who participated consistently in the *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* Ivy Village site for the community-based field component of the course. As described below, I chose to focus on four of these participants to create profiles in the presentation of findings, but data from all eight of the primary participants were analyzed in the determination of findings beyond the focus student profiles.

**Preservice teachers.** Eight of the primary participants in this study were preservice teachers - undergraduate, pre-education candidates (majoring in varying subjects and planning on teaching education levels ranging from elementary through secondary). From January 2012 to May 2012, these students were enrolled in EDTE 400, an undergraduate course titled, *Learning through Community Service*, through which they
chose, as their community/service component, to participate as literacy partners with elementary and middle school students at the Ivy Village apartments, a low-income housing project in Columbia, South Carolina. Of these eight individuals, seven were female (one Latina, two Black American, one Black Bermudian, and three White) and one was a White male White). Participants ranged in age from 18-21. They identified themselves as coming from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the seven participants who were born and raised in the United States, four participants grew up in southeastern states while three participants grew up in northern or northwestern states. These eight students were members of a larger group of 15 students who chose Freedom Readers Literacy Partners at Ivy Village as the site for their community/service component of EDTE 400. Of the 15 students selecting the Literacy Partners option, however, these eight individuals became the primary participants because they were consistently present for class and field sessions.

I collected data about the experiences of these participants through (a) their written course assignments, (b) audio and video recordings of their conversations and interactions with each other and secondary participants (mothers and children at the community service site) and our class discussions, (c) audio and video recordings of small group interviews, and (d) my researcher’s journal.

After analyzing data, I created narrative profiles about four of these participants (see Chapter Four) chosen because they provided more detailed content in their identity narratives, observations, reflections, and interview responses than their classmates, and they were the first participants to volunteer to participate in small group interviews. Of the four profile participants, three were White females, one was a Black female, and all
were from middle class to upper-middle class backgrounds. Three of these participants (two White and one Black American) were from South Carolina and one (White) was from Pennsylvania.

**Researcher as primary participant.** As the course instructor and *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* community-based site coordinator, I was also a primary participant of the study. I was a primary participant because of the auto-ethnographic approach I took to the research. Literary critic, Alice Deck (1990) described auto-ethnography as self-reflexive field accounts. As such, I engaged in self-reflexive practices to consider ways that my design of the course, the community-based literacy experience, and the research study itself were influenced by my past and current experiences as an individual, a classroom teacher, doctoral student, researcher, teacher educator, and community-based literacy tutor. This process reflects a methodology Denzin (1989) defined as auto-ethnography because it not only includes but foregrounds elements of the researcher’s/author’s own life experience when writing about others’ experiences. I collected autoethnographic data about my role in the process of this work through audio recorded and transcribed conversations and email correspondences that I had with the residence manager of Ivy Village, Ms. Bea and Tracy, and through ongoing journal notes and reflections about my experiences prior to and in the process of teaching EDTE 400, and through the construction of an account of my history of identity socialization.

I have long considered myself a White, European American female, however the process of writing this dissertation has caused me to consider my heritage in ways that I have not done prior to this. As described in detail in Chapters Six and Seven, I now
recognize a strong socialization toward Whiteness and current complexities as I come to understand more about my Italian American identity. My ancestors are from Italy and many immigrated to America before I was born. I am a first-generation Italian-American on my father’s side and a second-generation Italian-American on my mother’s side. My grandparents settled in Ohio when they came to America. My family would be considered middle class. I was socialized in some ways as a Catholic, Italian American, though many aspects of Italian culture, such as the Italian language, were not preserved through my generation. The stronger socialization was to Whiteness. I grew up in suburban Canton, Ohio where I was rarely exposed to people of Color other than Italian Americans in my neighborhood, schools, church, extra-curricular activities or places of early employment. I attended The Ohio State University (OSU) as the first person in my immediate family to graduate from college. Shortly after graduation in 1998, I moved to South Carolina.

My first position as a classroom teacher was in a rural high school in Loris, South Carolina, where I taught English at the secondary level for five years. I encountered many challenges as I was unfamiliar with rural, southern culture and had never worked with rural White or African American students. While I felt that I attempted to learn about the students and families during my years of teaching at the secondary level, it was not until I started a doctoral program in language and literacy that I ventured into the Loris community, an African American church in particular, to learn about literacy practices within the community. It was then that I realized the necessity and value of spending time, as an educator, in children’s communities to be able to contradict deficit-laden stereotypes too often held in schools and society. This coincided with my initial
readings in critical and sociocultural theories and my introduction to Tracy and *Freedom Readers* as described earlier in this chapter.

**Secondary participants.** The secondary participants in this study included the seven members of the undergraduate class (EDTE 400) who were also working with partners at Ivy Village as their community component but who were not included in the group of eight primary participants, children from the community site, and Mrs. Bea, the mother of one of the child participants and resident housing coordinator of Ivy Village where the community component of EDTE 400 took place. I chose to collect and analyze data from these secondary participants because I anticipated that insights from these data sources would further my understandings of data gained from primary participants.

**Seven other members of the undergraduate class.** There were originally 15 preservice teachers enrolled in EDTE 400 and who chose *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* to be their community-service option; however, only eight of them were consistently present or completed all assignments, field notes, or reflections. Thus, seven of those students became secondary participants. They included three White males, one Latina, and three White females. Of the male participants, one was from a northeastern state, one was from a southern state, and one grew up in the military and lived in various states and countries. Of the female participants, three were from northeastern states and one was from a southern state. Two of these seven secondary participants participated in small group interviews for this study along with the primary participants. Other data collected from these seven individuals (course assignments in particular), while not comprehensive in comparison to data from other participants, do provide additional
insights that strengthen and/or confirm findings gained from data collected from primary participants.

**The children.** Of the 17 children who participated in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, 16 were African American (6 males, 10 females) and one (female) child was White. The children ranged in age from five to 13-years-old and they attended local schools, ranging from kindergarten to seventh grade. Data collected that included the children include video and audio-recordings the USC students and children engaged in activities together. My purpose in collecting these data was to better understand how preservice teachers interacted with children.

**Ms. Bea.** Ms. Bea (African American female, 38 years old) was the mother of a participating child as well as the resident coordinator of the Ivy Village housing development. The children referred to her as Ms. Bea, and she was present for every session. She communicated with the mothers and relatives of the other children with regard to accepting child participants, explaining expectations, and voicing any concerns that might arise during the program sessions. Ms. Bea was in continual contact and communication with me throughout the 11 weeks of the program. She also spoke with the preservice teachers each week at the sessions.

Ms. Bea played a role in the development and planning of various activities during the sessions. She suggested that I provide diverse texts via genres, authors, and topics or perspectives. She communicated this desire when she saw that I had a majority of texts written by African American authors or reflective of African American culture and perspectives. Ms. Bea explained that she had to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the government (for funding) and the private owners of Ivy Village to provide equal
opportunities for residents (in this case in the manner of diverse texts as not to reflect only one race or culture). Ms. Bea also recommended having the Easter celebration. Though I believe it is important for preservice teachers to learn a multifaith approach to public education, I believed that it was also important to respect Ms. Bea’s wishes to have this Easter celebration and trusted that she knew the community members well and that this activity reflected the faiths of the children.

Data collected from Ms. Bea included informal, audio-recorded conversations during these times and email correspondence about the program at various times throughout the semester. Through these data sources, I hoped to capture information about the lives of the children, mothers, and community members. I also hoped to learn more about the housing development and its role in supporting community members.

**Human Subjects Approval (IRB)**

In January of 2011, I submitted a proposal to the Institutional Review Board for the pilot study involving the same context that was used in the dissertation study. The proposal was quickly approved as exempt. In February 2012, I completed an amendment to the approved pilot study to receive approval for ongoing data collection for the dissertation study. The amendment was approved within three days from the submission date and added as an amendment to the existing pilot study on record.

One consent letter was used for all primary and secondary adult participants in this study (Appendix B). It was approved as part of the IRB accepted proposal for the pilot study. This consent form was provided to and signed by all primary and secondary participants of this study and the pilot study. Prior to requesting signatures, I verbally read the form to all participants and explained the purpose and intentions of this study.
**Contexts**

There were three contexts in which data were collected for this study. Those contexts described below, were: (a) the University of South Carolina (USC), College of Education building (Wardlaw); (b) the community center and playground at the Ivy Village community site; and (c) my car used for transportation of some of the preservice teachers from the university to the community site.

**College of Education, USC.** The six, 75-minute, EDTE 400 class sessions were held on campus at the University of South Carolina (main campus - Columbia) in the College of Education building, room 114. Wardlaw 114 is approximately 500 square feet. There were 14 tables with two seats to each table in the room. Two tables were positioned individually in the center of the room, and 12 tables were connected to form a circle of tables. There was a smart board, projector, and podium and attached cart with a computer and paper projector. *Service Learning Shares* (culminating end-of-semester presentations) that students presented in class at the end of the semester and that were collected as data were presented in this room.

Other data collected in the Wardlaw building consisted of informal, focus group interviews and an informational, orientation meeting for the preservice teachers which occurred prior to beginning their community-based experience at Ivy Village Apartments. Small group interviews were conducted in either a small conference room or the center of a suite of offices in the College of Education building. I met there with two to three participants at a time for 30-45 minute small group interviews. Participants and I sat at a round table.
The syllabus (Appendix C), readings, and assignments were posted on the university’s online system called BlackBoard. Data in the form of service learning blogs (Appendix E) were collected from BlackBoard. Critical Identity Narratives (Appendix D) that students emailed to me were printed up and collected as data as well.

**Community site: Ivy Village.** The community site where *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* was held each week was also a context for data collection in this study. This site was located approximately 20 miles west of the university at Ivy Village Apartments (psuedonym), a property funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD provides government funding to private owners of housing developments to assist low-income tenants with housing needs and to improve communities by providing supplemental programs and assistance. Though Ivy Village Apartments are privately owned by investors and a management company, they receive government funding to assist individuals in securing an affordable residence and finding resources for needed services or opportunities, such as healthcare or medical assistance, educational resources, or job opportunities. The residents of the community are primarily African American, though there are several White and Hispanic residents. There are approximately 80 units and 162 residents at Ivy Village.

The preservice teachers met with children each week in Ivy Village’s community center (the resident manager’s office) to participate in literacy activities which I designed and assigned to the preservice teachers (see descriptions of representative literacy activities in Appendices J and K). They also ventured outside and played or participated in literacy activities on the playground, the basketball court, and surrounding benches and picnic tables.
The community center was about 900 square feet. There were four rooms in the community center: a kitchen area with a table and four chairs; a sitting area with two couches and a television; and an office area with the resident manager’s desk, two computer desks with two computers for residents’ use, and two book cases. When Freedom Readers Literacy Partners sessions were held, four additional tables and 26 chairs were set up in the main area of the community center. There was also a front porch with four rocking chairs and a backyard area with a basketball court, a picnic area, two benches, and a playset/jungle gym area.

**My car.** As the community site coordinator, I drove four of the eight primary preservice teacher participants who did not have vehicles of their own to and from the community-based site (Ivy Village Apartments). During that time, I was able to engage them in informal discussions related to the purpose of the study and to gain further insights about their perspectives. Thus, my car became a site for collecting data from the informal conversations that occurred within that context. I used an audio-recording device to record these data.

**Data Collection Methods**

The primary sources of data for this study were: (a) preservice teachers’ written assignments for EDTE 400; (b) audio and video recordings of participants’ conversations and interactions on our car rides to the community site, at the community center, and of the students’ Service Learning Shares (end of semester powerpoint presentations); (c) audio and video recordings of small group interviews with preservice teachers; and (d) my researcher’s journal.
Preservice teachers’ written and oral assignments. Preservice teachers completed written assignments throughout the course and community-based field experience. These assignments included (a) an identity narrative, (b) online discussions, (c) service learning blogs - observations and reflections, and (d) an end-of-semester Service Learning Share/presentation. The assignments were part of the course curriculum (Appendix C). I intentionally designed these assignments to introduce students to the notion of critical multicultural teacher education. Assignments were spread out over the semester, paired with selected articles (Appendix C), and accompanied by mini lectures, and whole group and small group class discussions and activities.

Identity narratives. One course assignment involved preservice teachers in reflecting on their identities by writing identity narratives (Appendix D). In these narratives, students described five social identities (Harro, 2000), how they were socialized into those identities, and how they felt they were positioned by those social identities within a dynamic system of oppression (Harro, 2000). These completed narratives were between two and four pages in length. I chose these as data because I hoped to capture ways that preservice teachers identified themselves with regard to their gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, age, religion, political affiliation, or any other culture or subculture they chose to describe. I also hoped to capture their awareness of oppression and their socialization and positioning with regard to oppression. I was curious to see if there was any connection between: (a) how participants described their social identities, socialization, and positioning in regard to oppression; (b) how they interacted within and interpreted their experiences with the children within the
community-based field experience; and (c) how they processed what they learned about children and families.

**Online discussions.** Preservice teachers’ online discussions in response to Chimamanda Adichie’s (2000) speech, “Danger of the Single Story” were also collected as data. This speech presents examples of how easy it is to form single stories of others based on limited information presented in literature and media. These discussions were collected to explore preservice teachers’ perspectives in response to some of the themes presented in the speech, such as stereotypical descriptions and misconceptions and limited, incorrect, or deficit perspectives of others. I wondered if the language and/or content participants included in online discussion responses would reflect language and/or content they used in their reflections of their experiences in the field, specifically with regard to how they were able or unable to communicate positive views of the identities, knowledge, and capabilities of the children and families. And, in general, I wanted to understand the impact of the Adichie’s talk on their thinking.

**Service learning blog observations and reflections.** Preservice teachers also completed service learning blogs (Appendix E). In these blogs, preservice teachers responded to questions that required observations and reflections of their experiences with Freedom Readers Literacy Partners at Ivy Village Apartments prior to, during, and after the time they spent there. The first part of the blog required preservice teachers to reflect on: (a) their expectations of the site and their role as literacy partners at Ivy Village; (b) biases, stereotypes, and assumptions about me (the teacher educator and site coordinator), the other preservice teachers participating in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, and the children and families at Ivy Village Apartments; and (c) their own
positioning (with regard to gender, race, race or other aspects of positioning) prior to becoming literacy partners at Ivy Village Apartments. Questions guiding those reflections were:

- What are your initial thoughts about engaging in service learning?
- How do you feel about your position within this experience, or rather, how do you think you might be viewed upon entering into this experience? Does this affect your initial thoughts of service learning?
- Write one field note entry towards the beginning of your service. Record specific details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.
- Write one field note entry in the mid-point of your service. Record specific details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.
- Write one field note entry near the end of your service. Record specific details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.
- Write one reflection towards the beginning of your service reflecting on your observations recorded within your first field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What were you thinking as you interacted or observed within the service session?
- Write one reflection reflecting on your observations recorded within your second field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What are you learning about students’ identities, interests, strengths, and motivations?
- Write one reflection reflecting on your observations recorded within your third field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What have you learned about within your experience in regard to any of the following – socialization or social interactions, teaching practices, learning and identity?
- What are some of the highlights / memorable moments of your experiences?
- How did this service learning experience change the way you think about yourself as a person/educator and the students you might teach?
**Literacy activities with child partners.** During their time at Ivy Village each week, the preservice teachers were required to engage in specific literacy activities with their child partners. Table 3.1 presents the various literacy activities.

Table 3.1 – Freedom Readers Literacy Partners Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Literacy Partner Bonding Activities:</strong>* Literacy Partners often participated in pre-reading activities while they were eating their snacks. The following are examples of these literacy partner bonding activities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Literacy Partner talked about the questions and worked together to create a collaborated book in which they each shared the following information. These were then presented. <strong>Draw yourself. Where were you born? Write the city and state. Then, draw a symbol unique to the place where you were born. Draw your family. Write one sentence about one member of your family and draw an arrow to your visual of that family member. Write down or visually represent three of your favorite things? Write down your favorite subject in school? Write one to three sentences describing one dream or goal you have in life? Decorate your page</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion of Family Time: Work with your partner to write three or more sentences addressing the following. Please use the following framework of statements and add more sentences if necessary: (Have your partner tell you who they enjoyed spending time with over the weekend) This past weekend, I enjoyed spending time with ___________. (Have your partner discuss the events) __________ and I ____________. (Have your partner explain why they enjoyed spending time with the person or people they chose) I enjoyed ______ because ______________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Reading Discussions and Activities:</strong>* Literacy Partners engaged in reading for 25-30 minutes each session. The following are examples of activities they engaged in during and/or after reading:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is going on in the book? Have you ever experienced what the character experienced? Can you relate to the plot or theme of the book? What do you have in common with the character in this book? Have you ever experienced something that is going on in the book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk about what a theme within literature is and identify the theme of the book you and your partner are reading. You will need to help your partner visually represent the theme of the book with chalk on the basketball court. <strong>Theme - central topic, subject, or concept addressed in the story. Discuss why the theme might be important or why the specific elements of the plot are important in the book. Make personal connections.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Elements of Plot: (1. **exposition**) background information (2. **rising action**) actions leading up to the main event or turning point in the story (3. **climax**) the highest point of action or most significant event, (4. **falling Action**) the events leading to the resolution or end, (5. **resolution**) the ending of the story

**Poetry:** Literacy Partners worked in groups of four to create a love-themed haiku one week. Each group presented for a competition to determine a group winner. They were provided the following as part of the instructions:

- *What is a haiku?* The haiku originated in Japan and is a verse (poem) written in three lines. The haiku does not rhyme. Instead, the haiku sets a mood or portrays a feeling or scenery. The entire haiku is composed in 17 syllables. The first line contains five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third and final line has five syllables. 5-7-5. Write a love-themed haiku to present.

**Presentations:** Each week literacy partners presented their books and the activities.

**Community Building Activities:** Each week literacy partners played outside on the playground or on the basketball court. Sometimes literacy activities were infused in these events. One week (before Easter) literacy partners participated in coloring eggs and an Easter Egg Hunt. The Easter Egg Hunt involved children finding eggs, answering the question on the strip of paper inside each egg (sentences with parts of speech questions), and then turning in their answers for candy. The final week literacy partners played on teams in competitive events: balloon popping, races involving eggs on a spoon and sponges used to fill up buckets with water from a sponge.

I audio-recorded interactions between two or three preservice teachers and their child partners surrounding those activities for 15-20 minutes each week. I also video-recorded interactions of preservice teachers with children during (a) pre-session activities such as informal talk at picnic tables, basketball games between preservice teachers and children, or play between preservice teachers and children on the playground, and (b) special-session activities such as Easter egg hunts, Easter egg coloring, and fun field or indoor activities between preservice teachers and their partners. I chose to collect these as data to capture additional interactions I might have missed as I interacted with students and children or walked around to observe during the sessions. I also used them to
compare to my researcher’s journal observations as well as preservice teachers’ reflections.

**Service learning shares (presentations).** Service Learning Shares (Appendix F) were informal presentations in which students in all six sections of EDTE 400 were required to share a description of their community site and their role in it as well as stories about their interactions and experiences with children and/or adults within sites. These “shares” were verbally presented by preservice teachers at the end of the course semester. I collected data from these presentations. These Shares were five- to-seven minutes in length. They were guided by specific questions that required students to create counter narratives of the children with whom they partnered in their service learning sites:

- Briefly describe your service learning site (place/setting, demographics, individuals with whom you interacted, and service responsibilities/tasks).

- What biases were revealed to you through your reflections and writing on identity, socialization, positionality or any other aspect of this class? In other words, what biases do you think you have of others or of particular issues based on who you are and how you have been socialized?

- How did this affect your service learning experience and your thinking throughout it (about yourself, your role in service learning, your thoughts on education, your role as a future educator, etc.)?

- What assumptions or stereotypes did you have of the people and/or children of your site before or in the beginning of your experience?

- What assumptions and/or stereotypes did you hear from others (possibly people within your site) that negatively defined and labeled children (others)?

- How did you get to know the children and/or people? Or how did you develop relationships within your site to get to know the individuals with whom you interacted?
• What did you learn about their identities (their joys, interests, goals/dreams, sources of pride, knowledge, family, language, or literacies)?

• How did (or how can) what you learn reverse deficit perspectives of children?

• What insights (no more than 3) gained throughout this experience inform your thinking about your future life purpose and career?

• What are you still thinking about even after your experience and reflections?

**Audio recordings in my car.** I audio recorded conversations among participants as they occurred in my vehicle as we drove back to the university after our sessions as the Ivy Village Apartments. I recorded these conversations because preservice teacher participants often shared interpretations of their experiences and interactions with children at Ivy Village with the other preservice teacher participants during these times, and I was interested in capturing how they interpreted their experiences immediately after sessions.

**Small group interviews.** I conducted four semi-structured, conversational small group interviews with two or three preservice teachers at a time. Small group interviews included two to three participants. Participants were asked to respond to/discuss ten questions (Appendix G). By collecting these data, I hoped to gather information about participants’ perspectives on and past experiences with individuals from backgrounds different from their own. I also hoped to learn more about their identities through the stories they shared during these conversations. Each small group interview was audio-recorded and lasted 30-45 minutes. The interview responses were later transcribed.

**Researcher’s journal.** The primary autoethnographic element of the study was my researcher’s journal (Appendix M). I used an iPad notebook to record notes,
questions, observations, and reflections during Ivy Village sessions. In this notebook, I reflected on my social identities and life experiences. I used the critical identity narrative assignment (Appendix D) that I assigned to the students in EDTE 400 as a guide to reflect on my own socialization and positionality. I reflected in more depth than I required of the students because, as the researcher of this study, I thought that a deep exploration of my own experiences could expand insights upon which I might draw to better understanding my teaching decisions as well as data collected from the other participants of the study.

In addition to tracking my own socialization processes, I also used my research journal to record field note observations and reflections about the students’ interactions at Ivy Village and in other contexts. Because I was an active participant as an academic instructor and community site coordinator, I rarely had time to collect extensive in-the-moment field notes. In my researcher’s journal, I recorded my thoughts, reflections, and questions as soon as possible after each session with the preservice teachers.

My reflections in my researcher’s journal ultimately encompassed descriptions about how I understood my role as a teacher educator attempting to infuse tenets of critical multicultural education within a one-credit course, as a site coordinator trying to model culturally responsive pedagogical actions for preservice teachers, and as an individual trying to negotiate awareness of my own social identities and positioning within my roles and in all aspects of my life.

Organizing, Storing, and Transcribing Data

All data were downloaded as soon after collection as possible into electronic folders on my computer, as well as in N’Vivo (data analysis software that allows users to
house data by generating folders that can be labeled and reserved for later analysis). I also backed up data using two thumb drives. Hard copies were organized into folders. All data were kept in a secure location (a locked office at home) to ensure confidentiality. I reviewed all video and audio-recordings but chose not to transcribe them due to overlapping data from my observations and reflections and students’ additional data. I transcribed all small group interviews manually on a computer. I also printed hard copies of students’ narratives, blog entries, presentations, and small group interview responses and organized them within a notebook, creating a profile for each of the 15 student participants.

**Data Analysis.** Preliminary data analysis occurred throughout the collection of data. As I wrote field notes and reflections and transcribed interviews and audio-recorded conversations and presentations, I began pre-coding. I recorded preliminary words or phrases that reflected potential categories or themes and patterns in the data as data codes. Rather than relying on memory, this was a way to document my initial ideas and thoughts for consideration during the process of data analysis (Saldaña, 2000).

**In-depth analysis.** After all data were collected, I used data I collected from each participant to create individual collages. I did this by spreading out the data for each participant on two large folding tables and a desk located in my office. I began coding data organized within these collages for each participant, one at a time, identifying what I thought might be important themes and patterns. Then I wrote analytic memos to further reflect on and analyze the significance of the themes and patterns (Saldaña, 2000). I continually looked for patterns that emerged through these coding processes and categorized them as narrative themes. As new relationships formed in the data, the
categories were collapsed or expanded until I felt that I had exhausted the data and sufficiently organized my findings.

**Narrative analysis.** Polkinghorn (1995) explained that “stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes” (p. 8). I chose to use narrative analysis for my study because the data, when organized into collages, began to read like stories reflecting participants’ understandings of their identities and life experiences, EDTE 400 and *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ experiences and learning, and teaching perspectives and visions. Freeman (2004) claimed that narrative analysis is highly speculative. Its interpretative tools are designed to examine phenomena, issues, and people’s lives holistically” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xi). The data collected from each primary, preservice teacher participant for this study helped me represent a picture of their experiences, perspectives, and learning with regard to their identities, lives, people different from themselves, EDTE 400, and *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ interactions. In this way, narrative analysis helped me to examine phenomena that emerged from data about participants’ lives and experiences and the relationships among them. Reissman (2008) noted that narrative analysis includes diverse coding methods, such as thematic, structural, dialogic coding methods. Borrowing from Saldaña’s (2009) manual for coding, I used different coding methods (thematic, process, and holistic) to aid in revealing phenomena within data. Reissman’s (2011) guide to narrative methods helped me further examine the patterns across data and relationships between phenomena. I developed the four narrative profiles by first creating a Word document for each participant. I began constructing a profile for
Hannah Ruth. I cut and pasted her narrative, following by portions of additional data that I collected from her. I created subheads as I organized the data. Once Hannah Ruth’s profile was complete, I used it as a model for the other profiles. After I constructed the four narrative profiles, I constructed my narrative profile using the same format and adding subheads as my narrative developed in more depth.

**Trustworthiness, Triangulation, and Member Checking**

I used a variety of data sources to ensure trustworthiness in this study. Audio and video recordings and field notes, researcher’s journal, observations of participants’ interactions with each other, students’ course assignments, and informal small group interviews with participants provided important triangulation of data as I considered patterns as well as contradictions across data sources.

To engage in member checking, I shared transcripts and my interpretations of data with participants, committee members, doctoral peers, and friends or family members through analytic memos and reflections. I asked them to respond to the validity of my interpretations from their positions given the contexts and particulars of the study and data. I also asked them to respond in terms of their comfort with my representation of their words and actions. Sharing my transcripts and reflections and seeking feedback in this way helped me monitor my interpretations of the data and make adjustments accordingly. Most of the participants who responded said that they were comfortable with my representation of them and with my interpretation of data. The only request for a change came from a participant who explained that she was uncomfortable with being described as African American because she has “never stepped foot in Africa,” and preferred that I describe her as Black or Black American (if I have to refer to her race)
throughout the dissertation. As such, I went through all chapters and changed descriptions referring to her from African American to Black American.

Because I began exploring the topic of this dissertation study with a pilot study and then engaged in a primary study over time, I brought another element of trustworthiness to the research design. Looking at issues integral to this study over time was critical in building a study that has integrity in addition to my careful attention to foregrounding my own biases, views, positioning, and socialization to particular perspectives.

Subjectivity/Positionality

Subjectivities that distort analysis. Autoethnography methodology encouraged reflexivity with regard to my subjectivity and positionality within my study. As I monitored my subjectivity, I gained an expanded awareness of how my subjectivities might distort analysis of data and findings or increase the virtuous nature of them (Glesne, 2006, p. 123). For example, as I described my race and ethnicity previously in this chapter, I became more aware that my limited experiences with people of Color prior to becoming a teacher and the Whitification (Kinloch, 2009) of my history as an Italian American may have distorted my interpretations of my own as well as the preservice teachers’ processes and understandings of the children with whom they partnered. I structured EDTE 400 and developed rationales for the assignments I created based on my own experiences, learning processes, and growing awarenesses. I realize now that I may have made assumptions about undergraduate students’ identities, life experiences, and learning processes and that the assignments I created may not have been as effective as I hoped they would be.
**Changed perspectives and positionality.** In addition, my own perspectives changed through the course of this study as well as prior to it as I gained a greater critical sociocultural consciousness through my doctoral research experiences and reflexivity regarding those experiences. The insights and understandings that I gained throughout my doctoral studies positioned me to be more aware of how my perspectives are shaped by my experiences and mediated by factors such as race/ethnicity, social class, and gender (Banks, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). My research and teacher education efforts and passions now focus more on the ideology outlined by Villegas and Lucas (2002) which includes supporting ways for preservice teachers to develop affirming attitudes toward students (children) from culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as to develop commitments and skills to act as agents of change, and foster culturally responsive pedagogy. In the process of supporting preservice teachers, I found it essential to further reflect on my socialization and explore ways that I have gained and expanded my own critical sociocultural consciousness. As the instructor of EDTE 400, *Learning through Community Service*, I restructured the course to model tenets and aspects of sociocultural and critical theories that I had been learning. I also expanded the context for the course to include a community-based field site so I could observe, in a community setting, interactions between myself, my students and children and mothers who were participants in this study. This reflected similar processes that I experienced through my doctoral process and certainly my biases toward the importance of such experiences.

**Relationships and intersubjectivities.** A necessary and critical aspect of qualitative inquiry is in the researcher’s ability to develop relationships with his or her
participants and persons in the field. Glesne (2006) explained that in qualitative research, the nature of relationships depends on rapport and the quality of the researcher’s self-awareness. Another element in my positionality was my two-year relationship with the residence manager and mother of a participating child in the community-based program that provided the literacy partners for the preservice teachers in this study. Through numerous conversations with her over two years, I shared with her my developing understandings and research passions about supporting opportunities for preservice teachers to expand their understandings and perspectives of children from diverse groups through numerous informal conversations. As a result, Ms. Bea shared with me some of her past experiences, passions, and efforts supporting the residents within her community. Our efforts and hopes to provide opportunities and to support each other seemed aligned. What appears to have developed is what Glesne (2006) called intersubjectivity or how the subjectivities of the researcher and the participants help to shape the research. Throughout the analysis process, I became more aware of how the relationship I developed with Ms. Bea influenced analysis of the data. This is one aspect of subjectivity I tried to monitor as I analyzed data. For example, when I shared with her my interpretation of particular data, she was able to share her understandings in ways that highlighted aspects I had overlooked. I more intently reflected and monitored these occurrences within the data analysis process as I became more aware of them.

**Positionality and the negotiation of authority.** Finally, the fact that I was the instructor of EDTE 400 and the community site coordinator for Freedom Readers Literacy Partners positioned me to have authority with regard to my participants who were preservice teachers. I felt that I was able to form better rapport with undergraduate
students through involvement in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* than when I interacted with them as solely the instructor of the course on the USC campus. However, I am not sure that we formed a relationship as a group that they may have needed to feel more comfortable within the community site. As the preservice teachers met with me each week to participate in the program at the community site, I interacted with them on a more personal level than when we were in the university classroom. We often talked about our lives and interests before or after sessions. We also engaged in playful activities with the children at Ivy Village Apartments. I often considered the effect of preservice teacher participants’ comfort levels at *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ sessions with relation to how they chose to respond to small group interview questions or in written assignments. As would be expected, the preservice teachers who appeared more comfortable with the Ivy Village children reflected more positive views of the children. Preservice teachers also observed my comfort and ease in conversations or interactions with the community members, mothers, and children who live and work at Ivy Village Apartments. They eventually began to interact with Ms. Bea and the children’s mothers, often initiating conversations with them. This was important to my positionality as a site coordinator and teacher educator because the preservice teachers were able to see ways to personally relate with children, their families, and community members.

**Positioning self as learner.** In the beginning of *Freedom Readers Literacy* at Ivy Village in 2011, I was nervous about going into the Ivy Village community because I thought that I would be viewed by the children and their family members as a White woman who thought she knew what was best for them. I also did not want to be viewed
as a White person who was there to provide charity in the form of books and snacks. I monitored awareness of my positionality throughout my experiences at Ivy Village. I continually talked with Ms. Bea, listened to her stories, followed her suggestions, built plans from her ideas, or asked her for her expertise and input. I also continually positioned myself as a learner and felt like a part of the *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* community. I think that how I positioned myself as a learner adversely affected undergraduate students’ comfort and confidence in the site. I think they often looked to me to tell them what to do next and expected me to have a stance as the expert within the site.

In these ways, I continually considered how I was positioned within the various contexts of my study through data collection and analysis and how it influenced data and affected data analysis, particularly when students were asked to examine oppressions and discuss what they learned about the children and community members of Ivy Village Apartments. Since EDTE 400 assignments required that students move away from any deficit perspectives of children and people from backgrounds different from their own, I am not certain if preservice teachers’ responses represent authentic understandings or if they are the responses they knew I wanted from them.

**Ethical Issues and Reciprocity**

I preserved the anonymity of participants in this study by using pseudonyms when referring to all participants and the community-based research context. Reciprocity was provided in various ways. EDTE 400 students were required to serve 20 hours in a community site during one semester. Participation in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* fulfilled the 20 required hours. Participation in small group interviews was
counted as part of those 20 hours for the course. This helped participants who needed to make up for time missed from *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* sessions. This also helped me to collect additional data from participants without asking them to meet outside of the required 20 hours. Participants who were not part of small group interviews or who also needed more hours to fulfill their 20 hours, were given options to stay after the hours designated for our sessions and play with the children at Ivy Village or help them with their homework. This time also counted as part of the 20 required hours.

Another form of reciprocity for preservice teacher participants involved transportation I provided for them to and from Ivy Village Apartments. Undergraduate participants benefitted from the opportunity to gain insights from reading transcriptions or discussing their thoughts about my interpretations of data during member checking that they may not have gained if they had declined the opportunity to be a participant within this study.

I also provided all preservice teachers and their child partners with snacks, beverages, and special treats or prizes for activities at the sessions each week. It was important for me to provide these food and drink items to show the preservice teachers and the children my appreciation for their participation in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* and to make them feel more comfortable and welcome at Ivy Village Apartments during the sessions. In addition, each child received books and activity boxes. Children were given one book, purchased by me, to take home (and keep) each week. The program provided participating children with additional time spent reading outside of school and support to practice or build literacy skills such as reading.
comprehension, learning elements of a plot and storytelling, writing in various genres, and conducting oral presentations.

Reciprocity for Ms. Bea and the community center came in the form of preservice teachers helping to set up tables and chairs and clean up each week. I also provided the residence manager with a gift card at the end of the program to show my appreciation for her participation and willingness to work with me and preservice teachers.

**Timeline**

Qualitative research requires creating timelines to help researchers stay focused and intentional during the research process. It is important to allow a margin of flexibility within timelines to work with the unpredictable nature of research. Table 3.2 provides the timeline followed for the implementation and completion of this study.

Table 3.2 – Timeline for Dissertation Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan. 2012</th>
<th>Received IRB approval for amendment to collect data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. – May, 2012</td>
<td>Data collection/organization of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June – Sept. 2012</td>
<td>Wrote dissertation proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24, 2012:</td>
<td>Submitted final dissertation proposal to committee members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. – Dec. 2012:</td>
<td>Transcription/initial data analysis/member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. – Dec. 2012:</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 2012 – April. 2013:</td>
<td>Wrote dissertation; further member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23, 2013</td>
<td>Submitted dissertation to committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8, 2013:</td>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

I opened Chapter One with a story about literacy as a pathway to freedom, a freedom I defined as leading to: (a) expanded ways of thinking and being; (b) critical
reflection practices to change deficit perspectives and misunderstandings; and (c) increased opportunities and insights for students and teachers. *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* may be one element in a pathway to the freedom I describe. A new pathway for me, as a teacher educator and the researcher of this study, was opened through the empirical understandings I gained when examining my own socialization to particular identities as well as the socialization processes of my university students was we worked to develop and use a critical lens to examine views about children and families and the potentials they hold. My hope is that findings outlined in the following chapters will provide insight for understanding and further developing critical multicultural teacher education and equity pedagogies and will give hope for the potential of such work, even in the context of a one-credit course.

**Organization of Findings Chapters**

Findings are organized in Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, and Eight of this dissertation. Chapter Four details the researcher’s (my) auto-ethnographic profile, followed by Chapter Five which unpacks insights from my profile about my socialization to specific identities that help me consider the development of my critical sociocultural consciousness. Chapter Six presents narrative profiles of four of the primary participants - four preservice teachers – to describe their socialization processes as a part of their learning in EDTE 400. Chapter Seven presents patterns discerned across the four narrative profiles combined with additional data from the other preservice teacher participants in answer to the research question about students’ learning through the EDTE 400 experience. Chapter Eight focuses on my role in EDTE 400 as teacher educator and includes findings about course elements that supported or impeded student learning.
Chapter Nine concludes this dissertation study by providing implications for the field of teacher education and for further research.
CHAPTER FOUR
LISA / RESEARCHER: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This study focused on the growth of students in my EDTE 400 class as well as on the growth and development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness and my role as the facilitator of a course that attempted to introduce university students to foundations of culturally responsive and equity pedagogies. Those foundations included an introduction to a critical stance – challenging deficit views of families and beginning to recognize structures that perpetuate those views. This was supported by assignments that required students to examine their own socialization into identities that positioned them with respect to systems of privilege and oppression. In much the same way, I examined my own history of socialization. That history is presented in this chapter as my narrative profile, the heart of the autoethnographic aspect of this study. It is written in partial answer to the research question: What can I learn about the growth and development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness in the process of this study?

Drawing on autoethnographic methodology, this profile is similar to, but much more detailed, than the student profiles which are presented in Chapter Six and analyzed in Chapter Seven. It is the result of careful reflection, journaling, and analysis of my life’s experiences as I considered how I was (and continue to be) socialized to race, gender, sexual orientation, faith, age, and language identities. This extensive reflection is critical to understanding decisions I made as a teacher of EDTE 400 and decisions made in the
development of this study, but even more important, the act of constructing this chapter was an essential part of the ongoing development of my own critical consciousness. Analyzing, writing, conferring with others, and engaging in multiple rewrites of this narrative led to deeper and deeper insights about the complexities and realities of my own positioning as a raced, classed, faith-oriented, gendered human being.

A key reason that I chose to present these autoethnographic findings before the presentation of student data was that, as a critical scholar and teacher educator, I believed that it was important to present a reflection on my own identities and experiences as a backdrop for understanding students’ identities and experiences. Though I constructed the student profiles (presented in Chapter Six) before I constructed mine (and used the student profiles as a template for writing my profile), in organizing this dissertation, I wanted readers to understand the history of my own socialization as a preface to understanding my analysis of other data. As will be revealed in this chapter and the following chapter (which analyzes my profile), the construction of my narrative led to a recognition of my strong socialization to Whiteness, something I had not considered until I engaged in this autoethnography. As a result, while I discuss other socialized identities – faith, sexual orientation, class, language – the chapters presenting student data (Chapters Six and Seven) reflect the focus on Whiteness in my own narrative leading me to be particularly drawn to racial messages in students’ stories.

With this foundation and rationale in mind, a history of my socialization to a range of identities is organized in this chapter according to:

- My perceptions of social identities and socialization (an in-depth narrative describing family history as it shaped specific identities), particularly as related to:
I am a 36 year-old female who was born and raised in Canton, Ohio. I have one older brother. My father was a barber by profession but was also a small businessman who owned his own barbershop and a few other buildings and land properties that he leased out to others. My mother worked in the payroll department of The Timken Company, a roller-bearing steel company. I was raised in the Catholic faith. I was baptized at birth and attended Catholic schools from Kindergarten through twelfth grade. My father was born in Calabria, Italy, and immigrated to America with his mother when he was 14 years-old. I am a first-generation Italian American on my father’s side of the family. My mother was born in the United States, but her parents and ancestors were from Abruzzi, Italy. I am a second-generation Italian American on my mother’s side of the family. I was socialized to be a White American and identified myself as a White American with Italian heritage or ethnicity up until I began my doctoral studies at the University of South Carolina.

**Perceptions of Social Identities and Socialization**

**Gender.** I was socialized to be a female by my family in many different ways. My mother began dressing me in pink, yellow, or white dresses when I was very young. She and my aunts encouraged me to wear dresses and to appear neat and clean. Most
times I appeared neat and clean; however, I demanded to wear pants as soon as I could speak and have many pictures of me with my hair loose and frazzled from pulling out my berets or hair clips during the day. I know my mom was often disappointed with me for doing this.

**Socialized gender activities.** What I remember most about being socialized as a female in my family was how I was often advised to stay with my mom and aunts during the day or during social activities rather than go with my dad, brother and uncles. I was encouraged to engage in, what at the time, was considered female gendered activities. I was put in activities like piano, gymnastics, and dance. I was encouraged to clean, cook or bake, and stay inside with my mom and aunts. I was discouraged from participating in activities such as constructing model airplanes, working on cars, cutting grass, or shoveling snow. I spent a great deal of time listening to ladies talk about topics such as cooking, meal and event planning, and people. I remember getting bored easily; if other children were not present, I played with toys or read books alone somewhere. Parents and relatives bought me female gendered toys such as dolls, Barbies, and kitchen/cooking tools when I was a child. I enjoyed most of these toys, but I also gravitated toward gender neutral toys, such as stuffed animals or animal play figurines, Smurfs, or Star Wars.

I often played outside in my neighborhood or in the woods behind our house with other children when I was a child. The gender role norms were not as prevalent when I played outdoors, I tried to keep up with or do the same things as my brother or our male friends and cousins. I was more competitive when playing with boys than when I was playing with girls and remember trying harder during outdoor games.
Noticing gender privileges from an early age. My father was head of the household and what he chose to do was the final decision. Males were, and still are, glorified in my family, partly because they carry the “Italian” family name. My parents were married for 11 years before they were able to conceive and have children. My brother was born five years before me, and my parents and extended family were thrilled to have a male born into the family. My brother is the first male on my father’s side of the family. He is the only person who carries the “Ianni” family name. I discovered early in life that being male comes with more privileges than being female. My parents, aunts, and uncles directed more attention to my brother with regard to responsibilities and held higher expectations of him in terms of being financially successful and independent in life. The main expectations that I remember my parents and relatives having for me as a female were to behave and “stay out of trouble,” be nice, look pretty, clean/neat, and happy, try my best in activities, achieve good grades, and go to college.

Gender and education. When I was born, my mother resigned from her job in the payroll department at Timken although she had been promoted to a supervisor position in the department by the time she became pregnant with me. Numerous times, she made a point to share with me how she gave up her career to stay home with her “daughter.” When I was in middle and high school, she explained her career experiences and the reality that she was unable to further excel in her career because she did not have a college degree. I always sensed a slight disappointment or regret that she had given up her professional position to stay at home with me. I was uncertain of my future professional life’s path throughout most of my formal schooling, but I also do not
remember any aspirations of growing up to have children or be a stay-at-home mother like my mother.

**Sexual orientation.** I was clearly socialized to see romantic and sexual relationships as male-female. Family members would often ask me if I had a boyfriend. It never entered my mind that an alternative would be an attraction to females. My family made it very clear that I act “appropriately” with males, for example, not becoming pregnant as a young adult or out of wedlock. I heard verbal comments throughout my childhood from my parents about how this would disgrace our family and be highly disappointing. This was frowned upon more for females than males. I often heard my parents and relatives talk negatively or judgmentally about distant cousins or other young people who had children when they were young and out of wedlock. So I learned to “stay out of trouble” in this regard and made it a high priority in my life to not disgrace my family with my actions and decisions regarding sexual orientation and relationships with males.

**Social class and the importance of financial success.** From an early age, I was socialized to see financial security as key to success. My father was most proud of buying a home and owning his own business and land properties. My parents paid for my undergraduate college and were so proud to be able to do it. They often said, “We made sure you didn’t have student loans. We wanted you to receive a college education and be clear of debt when you graduated.” Since my parents were married and working for 11 years prior to having children, they were at better positions, financially, to support us than many people who marry in their early twenties and immediately start a family. As a result of what they were able to provide, I developed misconceptions about my family’s
socioeconomic class. I do believe we were middle class; however, my brother and I had many privileges enjoyed by those of higher economic statuses. For example, my parents paid for private parochial schooling, various material things such as brand name clothing and accessories, various social activities, brand new cars when we turned 16, and college educations. The grade school (kindergarten through eighth grade) I attended included students from families of lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. I remember hearing my mom and other women talk about giving clothes to certain families or helping to buy food or pay for school activities for other families and their children. I noticed at a young age that the families who seemed to need the most financial help at my grade school were families who had five or more children. So when I was a child, I associated poor families with large families.

*Awareness of social classes.* These perceptions of social class changed when I went to high school. My parents sent me and my brother to the nearest Catholic high school, Canton Central Catholic High School. Most of the children from the Catholic grade schools filtered into the only Catholic high school in Canton. Most of the students who attended this high school came from upper-middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds. When I started making new friends in high school, I was part of a close-knit group of five girls, two of whom came from middle class backgrounds and three of whom came from upper-middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds. I spent a lot of time with the three girls, who were considered upper-middle to upper class. It was during those times that I noticed many socioeconomic differences and differences in life experiences from what I was used to in my family. A few obvious differences I noticed
were that their houses were much bigger than mine, they had housekeepers and gardeners, and their cars and vacations were more exclusive and luxurious.

*Social class and education.* My parents repeated the mantra to me throughout my life that, “If you receive a college education you will be successful.” They believed, and socialized me to believe, that “getting an education” was the most important thing in life. My education accomplishments were my parents’ accomplishments and became a great source of pride for them and they saw this as learning “American ways” and gaining social status.

This view of education made some of my high school experiences even more impactful as I considered my educational future. Three of girlfriends in high school, who were in the highest socioeconomic classes of my circle of friends, were also in higher level or more advanced classes than the three of us who were from middle class families. I took college preparation classes for most subjects and lower level math classes for at least two years of high school. When I went to speak with my high school academic counselor, Sister Mary Claire, about college applications, she suggested that I apply to either Canton’s Kent State Stark branch of Kent State University or Akron University. I told her I was interested in going to The Ohio State University and she bluntly said that she did not think I would get in considering my mediocre grades and the level of classes I had taken in high school. My three (higher income) girlfriends and other students who were in advanced level classes were counseled to apply to numerous colleges, most small, private or Ivy League colleges. I was really disappointed when my high school advisor shared her opinion that Ohio State would not be a possibility for me, so much that it fueled my motivation to apply a few months earlier than was suggested for high school
students to apply to colleges. I received an acceptance letter from The Ohio State University within a month after sending in my application. It was the only undergraduate college application I completed, and I remember the immense feeling of pride I felt as I marched down the hall to Sister Mary Claire’s office to show her my acceptance letter. I did not think much about these differences of social class and academic opportunities until I was in graduate school, particularly in my doctoral program at the University of South Carolina.

**Social class shift.** Though I grew up in a middle class family, I believed that I would eventually move into a higher socioeconomic class. I do not remember having a plan for how this was going to happen. When I graduated from college at the age of 22, I moved to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina where I met my first husband. Our marriage lasted for only two years and ended due to many clashing differences in our backgrounds, beliefs, and ideologies. I met my second and current husband when I was 26, and as a result of this marriage, have since been in a higher socioeconomic class. I have gained a fuller awareness of differences between classes with regard to opportunities and privileges as a result of my transition from a middle class background to a higher economic class position. For instance, I have become accustomed to being able to pay for things immediately without saving for them. I am able to pay for travel and accommodations whenever I need or desire to. I am able to pay for private education for my child or college courses for myself without assistance. If someone in my family has a medical emergency, we will most likely have the funds or be able to quickly attain funds. I also realize that I have easy access to financial advisors and attorneys that matter when managing finances or needing representation in various legal matters. I recognize these
examples as opportunities and privileges that result from having greater financial resources.

**Ethnicity.** I have always been aware of my Italian ancestry and ethnicity, because I heard stories as I was growing up that reflected the history of them. While, as I will explain later, I feel that I was socialized strongly to a White American identity, there were also strong elements that socialized me to some elements of an Italian American ethnic identity.

**Childhood memories of Italian ancestry and ethnicity.** My grandparents and older relatives spoke Italian and shared stories about how they came to this country on huge ships with only one or two trunks of belongings. My mother’s parents passed away before I was born, so my father’s parents were the only grandparents I knew. When I describe them to friends, I explain that they looked like the farmer and his daughter in the portrait painting by Grant Wood entitled “American Gothic,” standing stoically in front of their home, both with grim faces. We have a few portraits of my grandparents when they lived in Italy and when they arrived in America, always dressed in solid dark gray or Black clothing, never exhibiting smiles. My grandmother had long hair that I never saw because it was always tightly wrapped up in a bun. As a child, when I asked my parents why my grandparents looked and acted like that, they said things like, “They’re from the Old Country. They have experienced really hard times. That can make you cold and hard.”

I still had very fond memories of them and the times I spent at their home. We visited my grandparents every Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evenings and ate a big lunch or dinner with them. My grandmother made everything from scratch or plucked
from their garden. I remember pasta with red sauce, meatballs, sausage and roasted peppers, Italian bread, tomato salad, and homemade red-velvet cake with White icing and sprinkles often waiting for us. They lived in a large, old house on the northeast end of downtown Canton, Ohio. The house was dark and dreary and held contents I imagined would be in a house in Italy. I was mesmerized by my grandfather’s huge travel trunk. It sat in their living room and was a constant reminder of their travels. I would look at it and try to imagine what life could have been like traveling over the Atlantic Ocean to America with hopes and dreams for a new life. I was always interested in hearing the stories that my grandparents and other family members shared about their former lives in Italy.

*Stories of immigration.* One of the stories I heard many times throughout my life involved my father’s family and how they immigrated to America. My grandfather was the first on my father’s side to immigrate to America. He had dreams of attaining a better economic life for himself and his family, so he immigrated in 1921 to work in a steel mill in Weirton, West Virginia. His hope was to earn enough money to buy a home and pay for his wife and child to join him. As he worked, he sent money back to Italy. He even sent extra money to my grandmother to buy food or clothes for relatives and other families in the town. My grandfather was considered a pioneer because he was the first man from that small town of Bel Monte in Calabria to travel to America. He told us many times, with distinct annunciation, “I crossed the ocean seven times!”

My grandfather’s plan to bring my grandmother and my father to America was delayed because of World War II. My grandfather made it back to Italy to see his son (my dad) shortly after he was born in 1933 and again in 1937 before the start of World War II;
however, he was unable to see my father again until after the war ended. Postal correspondence overseas seized for some time during the war, so no letters or money were received from my grandfather for years. My father and grandmother finally immigrated to America in 1947 and when they landed on Ellis Island, New York, they were greeted by my grandfather. That year was only the third time my father, at age 14, had ever seen his father in person, but it was the beginning of their new life together in America.

*Events, rituals, family meal, and stories from the Old Country.* Our Italian culture was preserved through events and rituals we enjoyed together. We visited relatives throughout the year, went to mass at our Catholic church every Sunday, and attended Italian festivals at the Catholic schools and churches in the area. As a child, I really looked forward to family gatherings during holidays or special events like birthdays, first communions, weddings, anniversary parties, and even funerals. At most of these gatherings, my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins would get together and celebrate.

Huge meals were prepared and shared; no matter the event, it seemed to center around the food. When I think about the ways my family preserved Italian culture, I think most about our food preparation and family meals. Eating was the main social event. We ate dinner as a family every night. We ate big meals with grandparents or extended family members at least three times a week. When we ate meals we spoke in high volumes. If friends visited and stayed for dinner, they were in for a surprise. Most of my friends were amazed at how much my family members yelled at each other during dinner. They thought we were angry, but we were just communicating. Speaking loudly, often
yelling over each other, was the normative way of communicating in my immediate family and extended family.

Many stories of relatives’ childhoods or lives in the “Old Country” were shared in the process of preparing and eating these meals. I remember hearing these stories from a distance as I played with my cousins peeking around the corner and sometimes stopping to listen. An image I hold of these storytelling events is of the adults sitting around a dining room table covered with plates of delicious Italian food and bottles of homemade red wine sharing details of these stories, some with excited animation and others with angry faces disputing details of the stories. The stories always concluded with loud bursts of laughter from the young to the old. These were happy times that I treasure, but when I think of the content of these stories, I realize that they were always shared to reaffirm a clear message reflecting why they had all immigrated to America. It was communicated as a necessary sacrifice to ensure that we – my brother and I and all of my cousins - could have a better life.

**Language socialization.** Although some aspects of our Italian heritage were preserved, language was not. My father entered public schooling in Canton Ohio City Schools as soon as he arrived. Since there were no classes or accommodations in place for English language learners, he was placed in a first grade class. The story I remember hearing about my father’s first American schooling experience was that he rapidly learned English because of the shame and embarrassment at being placed in such a low grade level. He had schooling in Italy and said that he had the knowledge to be in his accurate grade level in America, but since he did not speak English and the teachers were not capable of working with English Language Learners, they placed him in first grade.
When he told the story, he voiced pride in learning English so quickly and making it to his grade level in less than an academic year. Learning English against those odds was part of how my father defined his success in America. Later in his life, he often voiced pride with disdain for new immigrants who came to the United States and did not learn English or assimilate immediately.

English was the dominant language spoken at home as I was growing up. My father was fluent in Italian. My mother could engage in simple conversations in the Italian language and could fully understand conversations spoken in Italian by others. However, I only heard the Italian language spoken in our home when my father communicated with his parents or at family gatherings when my aunts and uncles spoke with the Italian elders who came to America before the 1940s. My grandparents, though they lived with us for many years, rarely spoke to us and when they did they only used the English they knew. When I asked my parents why they did not teach us Italian or speak it more often around us, they would say, “We want you and your brother to speak good English. There is no need to speak Italian.”

**Race: Socialization to Whiteness.** As described earlier, I have always been aware of my Italian ancestry and ethnicity because I heard stories as I was growing up and participated in holidays and family meals that celebrated heritage. However, my socialization as an Italian American did not socialize me as a Latina but as a White Italian American. Though we did not talk about claiming White identities, continuous statements were made about other races throughout my childhood socializing us to not want to identify as anything other than White. I grew up in a White suburban neighborhood. Most of the kids I hung out with were White. While remnants of Italian culture and ancestry
were woven into the fabric of my identity throughout childhood, my parents made great

efforts to socialize me as a White American; from their point of view that would ensure

that I would be successful in life.

The way my family defined success included losing Italian culture in order to

acculturate to White American culture. They worked very hard to ensure that we

benefitted from certain privileges afforded to White people. My father, grandfather, and

uncles told the same stories of their “hard” and “poor” lives in Italy to socialize my

brother, cousins, and me to be the most proud of being Americans. Most of their stories

of pride were of their successes reflecting assimilation to White American culture and

always involved education and financial success and stability. I was socialized to believe

that these were the most important ideals to attain in life; and to believe that a White

identity was the only way for me to achieve these ideals.

My father added to this reification of Whiteness when he told stories of how he

tried to make friends when he started school in the United States. He told us that those he
called, “Wasps” (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) would not associate with him and

when he tried to make friends with the “Blacks,” they called him a “Dago” (derogatory
term commonly used for Italians during the 19th century) and “Wop” (derogatory term

used for Italians and meaning ‘without official papers’). My father shared the content of

the letters he wrote to his relatives in Italy. In them he described the different groups of

immigrants that he encountered in Canton on a daily basis. He explained, “It is really
different here in American. We (Italians) are looked down on by the White Americans,

but at least we don’t have it the worst! The Black people are considered the lowest and

are treated the worst.”
The story my mother and father shared about how they met was also a reflection of the necessity to assimilate to White American culture. I am not sure my parents would have fallen in love and gotten married had he not assimilated. My mother was working in her uncle’s diner one summer in 1954 in Canton, Ohio. My father frequented the establishment for lunch. He would sit at the bar and engage in conversation with her. One day, he asked if she would go on a date with him. She said, and I heard this numerous times throughout my life, “If you shave that mustache and lose your thick Italian accent, I’ll go out with you!” According to my parents, it was not long before my dad adhered to her requests and they went on their first date. They were married in 1959 and 12 years later, in 1971, they had their first child - my brother. I was born in 1976.

*Constructing notions of racialized others.* My grandfather worked for Canton Drop Forge, a manufacturing company that made closed dye forging for major industries (aerospace, locomotive, oilfield, and power generation). As a result, he was able to purchase a brand new home in a downtown residential area of Canton, Ohio, for his family to begin their new life. Sunday lunch with my grandparents in this house was a ritual etched into my perceptions of racial and ethnic identity. This was a recurring and fond memory of the first seven years of my life, but it stopped dramatically when my grandparents’ lives changed as a result of a few unfortunate events. The story of what happened before my grandparents moved from their home in downtown Canton, Ohio, was very scary and upsetting for me as a child.

One late night toward the end of the summer in 1983, my father received a phone call from a police officer explaining to him that my grandparents had been robbed. My grandfather and grandmother were sleeping when they heard the sound of broken glass
coming from the basement of their house. My grandfather grabbed a wooden club he had upstairs and headed to the basement to see what the commotion was. When he went down the stairs that led to the basement, he immediately saw that a window had been broken in and at that very moment a man came out from behind the stairs and grabbed my grandfather’s club. Another man came out of the shadows and put a knife up to my grandfather’s throat and threatened him to hand over all the money he had in the house. My grandfather gave them all the money he had and the men quickly escaped, leaving my grandfather physically unharmed.

My father met a police officer and my grandparents at their house that night and they filed a police report. My grandparents were very upset about the robbery, so my father brought them back to our house and they stayed with us for a few days. Sometime during those few days, my father went to their house to fix the basement window and secure the other windows and doors with locks or deadbolts. My grandparents were then ready to go back to their home. It was not more than a week after they went back home that my father received a phone call from a police officer about a second robbery that occurred at my grandparents’ house. The officer explained that he could not understand my grandfather’s English, and that my grandmother was in hysterics. My father met the officer at my grandparents’ house once again to file another report.

This second robbery occurred in the middle of the afternoon on a weekday. My grandfather was outside in his garden and my grandmother was washing clothes in the house. Two males and a female entered an unlocked door leading into the house from the back porch, found my grandmother in the basement, bound her hands together, and dragged her around the house at gun-point demanding her to lead them to the places
where they had money and other valuables. They told her that they would kill her if she screamed. The entire time, my grandfather worked in his garden and did not hear a thing. The people who took money and valuables and left back through the same back door they entered. Sometime after they left, my grandmother started screaming and my grandfather ran inside to check on her. She was screaming and crying, and he could not get her to calm down.

When my father returned from meeting with the officer and filing another police report, he brought my grandparents’ home to stay with us again. From the descriptions that my grandparents shared, they believed that two of the people breaking in were the same males who robbed them the first time. All three of the robbers were described as Black. I am not sure if I was in the same room or listening from the next room, but the events my father and grandparents described seemed terrifying to me as a seven-year-old child. I had so many fearful thoughts imagining how my grandmother must have felt being dragged around at gunpoint by people in that big, dark house. I had so many questions that I do not remember vocalizing to anyone: What if they had shot her? What if they come back to their house? What if people break into our house? What if my family members are killed by robbers? What if I die?

Within a couple days after the second robbery, my grandmother suffered a stroke. Their house in downtown Canton was broken into for a third time while it was vacant. After that, my father permanently moved his parents to live with us and put their house up for sale and a new chapter began in my life. My experiences from that point and until I was 11 years old became the most negative and confusing experiences of my childhood.
Family change and conflict reinforces the superiority of Whiteness. My mother stayed home during the day to take care of my grandmother so she could not tend to me as much as she had in the past. When my father was at work and my brother and I were in school, my grandfather worked outside on our lawn or in our garden. He was very talented in landscaping and gardening, and as word got around, my grandfather attained a full time landscaping job. However, when my father came home from work each day, my grandparents would complain to him about what my mother did or did not do for them during the day. This led to my parents’ verbal arguments. There were times when my parents would argue and yell so loudly that I would try to stand between them to distract them or defuse the yelling. There were other times when my parents would not talk for days as a result of these arguments. I started to resent my grandparents. I felt that having them living in our home was destroying our family.

Some events in particular solidified my feelings that my grandparents’ move to live with us had a negative effect on our family. One such event occurred the first year after my grandparents moved in. I was seven years old and I began having stomachaches or an awkward feeling in my chest when my grandmother was left unattended. I would sit with her or follow her around scared to death that she would fall and die from her weak state of health. Years later, I identified that time in my life as the onset of my own anxiety and obsessive worrying during situations that seem beyond my control. One day, when my grandfather was working outside in the garden, he placed my grandmother in a chair next to our lower-level living room area. The chair was also right next to a three-foot deep storm ditch that was underneath three of the living room windows. I was playing in the living room, my mother was taking a shower, and no one else was home. I decided to
get up on the couch and knock on the windows to wave at my grandmother. There was a glare from the sun on the window and she could not see me. She got out of her chair to look closer into the windows. When she did, she fell into the storm drain. My heart dropped; I was terrified that she had died. I ran upstairs, past the bathroom where my mom was showering, and into my bedroom, slamming the door behind me. I crawled into my bed and under the covers and started to cry. I might have fallen asleep because the only thing I remember after those events was my dad opening my door when he got home from work. He wanted me to go downstairs to see my grandmother. He explained that she was alright and that she just needed to get a few stitches on the back of her head. I must have still been terrified because as we were passed the frame of my bedroom room door, I latched on and started screaming that I did not want to go down to see her. I was scared of what she was going to look like and probably felt that it was entirely my fault.

*Family conflict leads to developing racist views.* These stories are critical to my personal narrative about race because I eventually came to assign blame for the tumultuous years when my grandparents lived with us to the Black people who committed the robberies. The story of the robberies was shared many times over the course of my childhood and the race of the people who robbed my parents ultimately became what I remembered most about the story. Thus, I came to assign blame for the end of my happy home to actions of three Black people. The narrative was this: The Black men broke into my grandparents’ house, held a knife up to my grandfather’s neck, bound and dragged my grandmother around the house under gun-point, stole from them, and set the course of life disruptions in motion for my family. This was solidified for me when the main narrative that accompanied the explanations of the robbery, the sale of my
grandparents’ house, and our life changes was that it happened “because more Blacks were moving into the downtown Canton area” making it unsafe for my grandparents and other older Italian immigrants. As a result, many Italians, like my father, moved their parents out of the downtown area and into “safer” suburbs. The northeast end of downtown Canton later became the “Black” part of town.

**Visits to Italy further socializing us to be White.** I went to Italy for the first time with my mom and her relatives when I was seven. When my dad and my uncle were asked to go, they said they had no desire to go back to Italy. I heard statements like this several times throughout my life from the older males on my father’s side of the family. They would say things like, “Italy has nothing for us. Our lives are here in America. We are American.” When I went to Italy as a child, we stayed with Italian relatives in a couple of different cities or towns in Italy. I have fond memories of my time there, but I remember feeling distinctly American. I was frustrated because I could not speak or understand Italian. The Italian ways of living were so different from our Italian-American ways of living. It was confusing to me as a child. Even at such a young age I realized that we had Italian ancestry but that we were not really Italian. I felt that most when I was in Italy. When we returned home to America, I think I felt more American than Italian-American. My understanding of White identity and the importance of this identity to my family started to take shape in my mind even more after this point. I realize now that my family’s process of socializing us to be less Italian and our identification as more American than Italian American after traveling to Italy were ways to reify Whiteness.

**Racist jokes and White identity.** My family did not interact with people from other races (seeing themselves as White) or cultures on a regular basis and when they
(and extended family members) spoke of race it was in a more negative tone than a positive one. My father and the other males in my family often told jokes at the expense of non-White races and cultures outside of our own. They told jokes that often made fun of Black, Jewish, and Polish persons. Most people who listened laughed. Some people would just smile and shake their heads. I remember cringing when my father started telling jokes. I was very shy as a child and he was often the life of the party bringing attention to himself and to us. I was usually uncomfortable. While I think I was more uncomfortable with my father’s gregariousness, I was also sensitive to peoples’ reactions which I interpreted as their discomfort with the content of his jokes. But people seemed to gravitate towards my father. And though he was small man with the height of 5’9 and the weight of about 170 pounds, he had a large presence and an intense energy. I edified my father more than anyone. He was probably the most secure and strong figure I had in my life. He was the most generous and loving person I knew. He would have done anything for anyone. Reflecting, I believe that I may have overlooked or accepted the racist views of my father, because I held him up on a pedestal and had the upmost respect for him throughout my life further solidifying my identification with Whiteness as superior.

**Parochial schooling and Whiteness.** As mentioned earlier, my parents chose to send my brother and me to Catholic schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. There were 170-200 students in my grade school and they were White and Italian American. There were close to 400 students in my high school and they were predominately White, Italian American, Greek American, and Jewish. There might have been two Latino, three African American, and four Asian students in the entire school.
Most of my cousins went to public schools. There were often debates between my parents and aunts and uncles about which schools were better. I do not remember my parents’ reasons for believing parochial education was better than public education. I know it was not solely because of the religious aspect. My parents took great pride in sending us to Catholic schools and often said that parochial schooling would help “keep us focused.” I realize now that my parents quite possibly believed that we would stay focused because we were segregated with mostly White children. I was put into various social activities and classes: ballet, gymnastics, piano, and theater. Most of the children in these activities were White, with the exception of a few Italian American and Jewish children. I did not think much about my lack of interactions with people of other races when I was growing up and before I entered college.

**Relationships and Whiteness.** A fundamental expectation my parents held for me was to “stay out of trouble,” or more specifically, to refrain from giving birth as an unmarried, young person. However, the highest form of disappointment and disgrace in the eyes of my parents and extended family members would be to “bring home a Black person.” It was expected that I would never date or fall in love with a Black man. My parents and extended family would often say, “We’re not racist and have nothing against Black people but don’t you ever bring one home!” This was so ingrained in my mind that I cannot remember ever being attracted to a Black male. I often wonder if an attraction to Black males would have been just as likely as my attraction to other males had my family not had this expectation for me. My freshman year of high school I liked a boy in my school who looked and identified himself as Hispanic. His mother was Hispanic and his father was White. He was my lab partner in Biology and I talked with him every day at
school and on the phone. One day when I was waiting for my mom to pick me up, I was sitting with him on a bench in front the school. I think we might have been sitting pretty close to each other talking and laughing. When my mom pulled up to the front of the school, we said goodbye to each other and I got into the car. As soon as I opened the car, she said in a disapproving tone, “Who is that boy? Is he Black?” I said, “No. He’s half Hispanic.” She then said, “Well, he’s dark. You better hope your dad doesn’t see you with him.” I replied, “He’s just my friend,” and that settled it. However, a day or two later, I heard her ask my brother about him and tell my aunt as well. And just recently during Thanksgiving, 18 years later, we were sharing stories about our childhoods when my mom said, “Lisa, remember when you were dating that dark boy?” She had the same disapproving tone.

After I went to college, my parents sold their home to a Biracial couple. Most of the people living in that neighborhood were White. There were only three Italian American families (including our family) who lived in the neighborhood. I remember that their neighbors, Frank and Shirley, were so upset with my parents that they did not speak with them after that. Shirley had been in a card club with my mother for over 45 years and she quit the club shortly after my parents sold their home. My parents’ relationship with Frank and Shirley ended due to their willingness to sell their house to an African American, thereby allowing a “person of Color” (namely Black) to live in the “White” neighborhood.

**Whiteness and college days.** I had very few experiences and interactions with people who were not White, Italian American, Greek American, or Jewish (which was defined as White in my family) when I was growing up and before I entered college at
The Ohio State University. There were no students beyond those ethnicities in my grade school. There were two Latino, three African American, and four Asian students in my high school. I do not remember any children of races other than White or what my family saw as White (Italian, Greek, or Jewish American) in my other social or after-school activities. When I went to the The Ohio State University, which at the time enrolled 50,000 students, I encountered more people from backgrounds different from my own. However, for as large as the university was, I did not see people of other races as frequently as one would imagine having surrounded myself with persons of the dominant culture.

Social experiences. I lived on the eleventh floor of a co-ed dormitory during my freshman year of college. All of the females on my hall were White. On the male side of the dorm most of the males were White. There was one triad dorm room at the end of the male hall in which three males roomed together. People on our floor labeled it the “diverse” dorm room. There was a White straight male, a White gay male, and a Black male who roomed in the triad. The three of them never hung out on campus or outside of the dorm room. I do not remember seeing many students of other races in my entire dormitory or in the food halls, libraries, or classes.

During the spring of my Freshman year, I rushed for Greek Life and was invited to consider various White sororities. There were two sororities I was considering, and when I shared my choices with one of the girls in my Rush group, she said, “You can’t be in those chapters. They won’t accept you.” I was stunned and asked why she thought that. She replied, “You’re not Jewish. You have to be Jewish to be in them.” I was both disappointed and confused. After I asked a few other girls, they all said the same thing. I
ended up choosing another sorority that invited me to join. There were about 70 girls in this sorority. Most of the girls were White, three were Latina, two were Asian, and three were Jewish. When we had events with other sororities and fraternities, with the exception of the four Jewish groups, most of the members were White. My closest friends in the sorority were a Greek American named Alexia and a Latina American named Stacy.

The only time I saw students of other races was when I took Black Studies courses. The places I frequented consisted of predominately White college students. My Greek friend Alexia was bilingual, speaking both Greek and English, and spent every summer in Greece with relatives. On Friday nights we went to sorority/fraternity functions but on Saturday nights we ventured off campus toward the downtown and neighboring districts. I often accompanied Alexia to a Jamaican restaurant and dance club, where usually we would be the only White people there. The people who frequented the club were immigrants or students from Jamaica. We went to Latin dancehalls where we would attempt to dance various Latin dances. Latino/a people typically frequented these dancehalls. We talked and danced with various people who were at these establishments but we never formed any friendships with them. We frequented a Greek restaurant in the Arts District where Alexia and her Greek friends would meet. After hours they would clear the floor and dance traditional Greek dances. We also went to various Gay clubs in the downtown area because they had international music, dancing, and people from diverse racial and ethnic groups. I always enjoyed these experiences and I think it was the first step in my interest to experience new places where interactions
with people from a range of cultural and racial backgrounds might be more likely to occur.

*Preparing for the Peace Corps.* I developed the idea toward the end of my freshman year that I wanted to join the Peace Corps after I graduated from Ohio State, so I immediately chose a major (English) and engaged in certain activities and community service to prepare for it. In the beginning of my sophomore year, I signed up to be a part of a group that paired English speaking students with students from other countries who wanted to practice conversations in English. I was paired with two students from China, one female and one male. On different occasions that year, I met with each one of the students separately for lunch or go to shopping at the mall or grocery store. I also volunteered as an English tutor with an English as a Second Language non-profit organization. I tutored an older Russian couple and went to their apartment every week to work with them. I was often invited to stay and eat dinner with them.

I also volunteered at the Health Department in downtown Columbus. My job was to check in people who were getting HIV testing and had to ask them yes or no questions about their past sexual and drug use history. The people who came in ranged in age, gender, race, and sexual orientation. They often shared more about their history than the questions I asked. They seemed to want to be consoled and I felt inadequate to do so even though I tried my best to do so without judging them. I often thought that I too could be sitting there looking for nonjudgemental and empathetic consolation. I was never there to see them when they got their results, but they were on my mind.

*Race and the move to South Carolina: Continuing to learn White dominance.*

After I graduated from college, I moved to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Once again I
was not around people of other races or cultures. Most of the people I encountered in Myrtle Beach were White. After two years in Myrtle Beach, I moved to Columbia to complete a Master’s in Teaching degree at the University of South Carolina. I felt comfortable there and was excited to be in a larger city with more visible races and cultures. When my first husband came to Columbia with me to look for apartments, we were driving through the downtown area when he began counting the Black people in cars or walking on the streets. I could not believe he was doing that and we started arguing about it. He had grown up in Sumter, South Carolina, and said he did not want to live where there were so many Black people ever again. He said he loved Myrtle Beach because there were not as many Black people there. We ended up deciding to live in different cities for the first year of my program, so we commuted to see each other on the weekends. Though we moved back to Myrtle Beach right after I graduated, that year marked the final year of our marriage.

I gained the most experience with people of Color when I began teaching but the dominant message in my school perpetuated the reification of Whiteness. My first teaching position was in a rural, “critical needs” high school in Loris, South Carolina. Half of the faculty members, who were predominantly White, had grown up in Loris, attended Loris High School and went to college at the nearby Coastal Carolina University. Many of them had been teaching there for over 20 years. The student population was about 48% White, 46% Black, and 4% Latino. Seventy-eight percent of students in the high school were on free and reduced lunches.

Though I knew this school was labeled as one of two critical needs schools in the district, I did not realize the strong influence this label would have on shaping my
experiences there. The students on free and reduced lunch, primarily students of Color, were regularly identified as “special needs” students. High numbers of students did not receive a high school diploma and/or scored Below Basic on the statewide assessments. These statistics were pervasive and overshadowed the students’ tremendous efforts and successes throughout each school year. The culture of this small town – segregated White and Black populations - was often discussed by the faculty but usually as a rationale for explaining the statistics of poverty and failure. The emphasis at faculty meetings was always on what students needed to learn and what we needed to teach students to help them score higher on district and state assessment tests. But low expectations and deficit views prevailed: Administrators and lead teachers often asked teachers not to assign much homework as students would not do it and they would not have adults at home who could help them with it. I vividly remember one of the football coaches sharing his experiences visiting student athletes’ homes. He said something to the effect of: “You understand some of the behaviors of these students when you see the poor conditions they live in. Some of my players don’t have electricity or running water. I let them use the facilities in the locker room on a daily basis!” Though his statements reflected the reality that some of our students faced, no stories of celebration or students’ capabilities were ever shared to counter the stories of what our students lacked.

Our school adopted professional development training that advocated ideas from Ruby Payne’s (1996) book, Framework of Poverty. Payne suggests identifying students and placing them in socioeconomic categories with assumed behavioral characteristics. This further indoctrinated teachers to deficit lens of their students reinforcing negative
stereotypes and supplying a deficit framework for understanding student identities and behaviors (Gorski, 2008; Ng & Rury, 2006).

Many of the students, both Black and White, thought I was different from the other teachers and from people in their town. With my Midwestern dialect, they said I talked differently. I felt that students were initially cold and standoffish to me. It is likely that they were uncomfortable with my Whiteness and other differences. Eventually, I started to change the way I spoke by drawing out certain words like many of them did. Whether this was correlational or not, it seemed that students started to warm up to me.

I eventually began to feel, at least from my perspective, a closer bond with the Black students. I found them to be friendlier and more cooperative than the White students. Though, at the time, I was naïve to the structural inequities within the system of public schooling, I do remember making an effort to move many of the Black students into College Preparatory classes or to the county’s Arts and Sciences high school by asking the guidance counselor to consider and/or send paperwork to certain students from my classes who were interested and fully capable of being in College Prep classes or the Arts and Science high school. I later learned from these former students who moved into the College Preparatory track or the Arts and Science high school - through emails, Facebook, and running into them in person - that many did graduate from high school and go to college and graduate.

New thoughts about race and ethnicity. Until very recently, when thinking about my own race and ethnicity, I thought of myself only as a White American with Italian ancestry. As a result of my doctoral studies and the examination of sociocultural and critical theories, however, I recognize that my White identity is my socialized and in
politicized identity. My family and many other Italian American families strongly
socialized themselves as White because of the privileges Whiteness would bring
(Guglielmo & Salerno, 2003). As a result of conversations at my proposal defense, I
began to examine my identity in greater depth. I knew I was Italian American. This
meant that I was of Latin descent, but did that mean I was Latina? Why? Why not? What
implications might the examination of Italians in America have for my work? My life? I
began to read more about the meaning of the word Latino and learned about the
controversy that surrounds the naming of Europeans and European Americans of Latin
descent as Latino. While definitions of Latino predominantly focus on people from South
America, Central America, or Mexico (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 2013; Macmillan
Dictionary, 2013), other definitions describe Latinos according to historical connections
to people of “ancient Latium, in Italy, whose language was Latin [referring to people who
belong] to the cultures of the Romance Languages” (Fernandez-Morera, 2010). This
definition characterizes Latinos as people who speak or whose ancestors spoke languages
deriving from Roman civilization concluding that, by this definition, “all Italians,
Frenchmen, Spaniards, Rumanians, and Portuguese... are Latinos” (Fernandez-Morera,
2010). The much more widely accepted definition, however, is that which refers to Latina
as persons of “Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other
Spanish culture.” (2010 Census).

In the process of examining my ethnicity, I also began reading about ways that
Italian Americans whitified themselves “to benefit from the considerable rewards and
resources of Whiteness” (Guglielmo & Salerno, 2003, p. 31). At the same time, I read
about the radicalization of some Italian Americans who were also activists in creating an
oppositional culture to protest whiteness and empower themselves through racial relations with Blacks and new immigrants (p. 80). Thus, I began to understand the complexities involved in considering Latina identity recognizing that, regardless of actions to oppose racism, most Italian Americans self-identify as White because of the consequent privileges afforded to them.

This history was not something I had considered prior to the process of writing this dissertation. The act of writing and analyzing this autoethnography pushed me to reflect in new ways about my ethnic identity while exploring the strong White socialization that is at the source of every privilege I have experienced and is the identification my family holds onto (discussed in detail in Chapter Five).

The only other time I considered my racial identity was when I taught high school and my classes consisted of primarily African American students. One day, I was standing at the front of the room and an African American male student asked me a question that led to a discussion about race. I was about to talk about my positioning as a White person, when the same student who initiated the discussion said he thought I was Black. I asked, “Really? Who thinks I am Black?” and to my surprise, most students raised their hands. Looking back, I wonder if this was why the African American students seemed more comfortable with me than with my White colleagues; at the time, I wondered what it was they saw in me that led them to see me as other than White. I know that I viewed the students differently from the ways my White colleagues viewed them. Colleagues often talked about Black students as highly disruptive, uncooperative, and sometimes hostile. I saw the same students as well behaved, productive and successful - my most enjoyable students. My physical appearance – with black hair and a darker,
olive skin tone - may have also led them to naming my race as Black. I assumed that I looked different than the other White women in their lives but I also consider that they did not actually consider me to be Black but that this was their way of saying that I interacted with them in ways that differentiated me from other White teachers.

Beginning to think about all of these issues, at a recent Thanksgiving dinner, I brought up the idea of our family as Latino. True to our socialization to Whiteness, my family members would not hear of it. I talked about this with my uncle when we were left sitting alone at the dining room table. My uncle and his wife were like second parents to us. He is now 81 years old. He immigrated to America in 1946 and echoed my father and uncles when they said they did not want to go back to Italy. I told my uncle about my consideration that I might be Latina. Affirming the white racialization of generations of Italian Americans, he looked me straight in the eye and said, “That is not correct. We are not Latino.” When I saw how serious he was and how much it meant to him to be right about this, I remained silent and did not bring it up again. I am the first college graduate in my family and I have learned throughout the years to be very mindful of what I say around my family members. Although I also like to share what I have learned with my family members and, as an educator, I believe that supporting others in seeking new knowledge is my most significant purpose in life, I know that I need to temper my teaching with respect for the lives my family members have lived.

In another incident that occurred as I began to reflect on my ethnicity, I asked Jesse and Paul, two Ecuadorian employees in our home, if they thought I was Latina. They both laughed and shook their heads to say, “no.” I asked why they did not see me as a Latina. Paul replied, “Because you are American.” Jesse replied, “You are White.”
They know that my family is Italian, but they, as do my family members and most Italian Americans, consider me to be a White American. I also realize that it is likely that, because I am their employer, affluent, and married to a White man, I am a part of the power structures that equate Whiteness with positions of authority in business and commerce.

**Religion.** I was baptized as a Catholic and was raised in the Catholic faith. My family went to mass at St. Joan of Arc Catholic church, every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Most families who attended this church were White. My father was an usher who would collect the offerings. My brother was an altar boy who attended to the priest during mass. I celebrated most of the Catholic sacraments such as Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, and Marriage. My family prayed in our home at dinnertime. We had a few crucifixes hanging on walls in our house. Everyone in my family had their own Rosary beads. I remember feeling proud to be Catholic for most of my life. I did not mind going to church, because it was always a peaceful experience. I felt a spiritual connection to God since I was a child.

**Awareness of Catholic discontent.** At one point in my life, my father became disappointed with the Catholic faith. He started to visit other Christian churches and began taking me – at five years old - with him. My father spent a lot time at these churches and began intensely reading *The Bible* at home. My father started to read or quote *The Bible* when relatives were at our house, and he would try to engage them in discussions or debates about it. Whenever he would reach for his bible, my mom would roll her eyes and say, “Oh no! He’s at it again!” Anyone who engaged in these debates would have no idea what they were getting themselves into. My father was never wrong.
His interpretation was correct. Sometimes these discussions would get so heated that people would be upset afterwards. This would make me feel a little uneasy; however, it also amazed me to see him so passionate about what he believed to be the absolutely correct interpretations. As I got older, I engaged in many conversations with my father about interpretations of The Bible. Our discussions remained pretty calm. I had learned how to speak with him so that he would not get so worked up.

**Experiencing religious bias.** I remained Catholic until I moved to South Carolina after I graduated from Ohio State and met my first husband. He was from South Carolina and his father was a Southern Baptist pastor. I always got the feeling that they looked down on me for being Catholic. I was asked more than once if I believed in Jesus Christ. I was in disbelief. I certainly believed in Christ. We read from the same Bible from which other Christian faiths read. I was asked questions like, “Don’t y’all worship saints?” and “Do you want to get baptized and accept Jesus Christ?” When I started teaching in Loris, South Carolina, I was invited to attend about seven different churches. I felt that those who wanted me to attend their churches thought being Catholic was not good enough or “Christian” enough.

**First experience in a non-denominational Christian church.** In my first doctoral class, EDTE 800, at The University of South Carolina, we were required to conduct an inquiry of literacy practices outside of school. I decided to conduct an ethnographic inquiry within a community setting, a nondenominational, African American church called Trust in the Lord Ministries where some of my previous Loris High School students and a fellow teaching colleague attended. I attended this church for at least six months as the only White person. The church was located in a small, but newly built,
warehouse building. There were about 75-100 members of the church. I brought my daughter Auden, who was 10 months old, to most of the church services I attended. She would stay with me for the first 15-20 minutes of the service, and then an older lady would come over to me and offer to carry Auden to the children’s room on the other side of the church.

My original intention for visiting the church was to observe cultural literacy and religious practices in a setting that was new to me. However, in the process of participating and observing each week, I also had profound spiritual experiences. One I remember most vividly occurred on the third Sunday I attended Trust in the Lord Ministries. Shortly after the sermon the pastor beckoned for members of the congregation and any guests to come forward and pray. I do not remember all that the pastor said that day, though in that moment I do remember that he was urging us to open our hearts to Jesus Christ to protect us and guide us in our lives. It was silent for a while and then I heard sniffling and soft cries. Some women fell to their knees crying at high volumes while the pastor’s wife and a couple other female congregation members covered them with robes that had crosses on them, rubbing their backs or hugging them. It was an emotionally charged moment. I remember becoming very emotional as well. I know at the time I was experiencing a lot of stress and worrying a great deal about certain aspects of my life. I had been feeling very tense for months, and I could not remember when I last cried. I began crying when almost everyone else was becoming emotional and crying. I shed more tears than I can remember having ever shed before. I had never become so emotional around a group of people. And though it made me feel extremely vulnerable, I
had also never felt such a connection with other human beings in a social setting, most of whom I barely knew, in one moment in my entire life.

Toward the end of the service, I remember sitting in my seat, feeling very relaxed and peaceful and as though a heavy weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. I do not remember paying attention to what the pastor was saying at that point but I heard him call for people to come forward. Before I could even focus again and try to figure out why he was calling people to come forward, I stood up and walked up to the front of the room! Before I could make sense of any of it, I was standing with two other people in front of the congregation committing to partner with Trust in Lord Ministries.

When I explained this to my friend Kelly, who originally invited me to the church, she smiled and said, “Ah, the Spirit got a hold of you!” I do remember this day as being a significant turning point in my spiritual life and understanding of Christianity beyond the Catholic church. Following this event, I began to feel more at peace in my life. I also began to have more faith in a higher power and spent less time worrying about religious ideology. I started to focus on the spiritual aspect of my daily actions. The peace and connection I felt was a result of shifting my focus from “naming” and “passing judgments” on people and their actions to being open to learning from them. This experience is significant for me because it was highly transformative and represents, for me, another significant cross-cultural, community-based learning experience.

**Theoretical and spiritual awareness and shift in my personal life.** Other events have taken place in my life in the last five years that have changed my thinking about Christianity. The theoretical framework I describe for my dissertation research has helped me develop understandings that support humanity and human beings. I identify myself as
a Humanist and aim, professionally and personally, to value and respect all persons and help them to develop to their highest potentials. I believe in supporting people with regard to human and civil rights. I have also become more aware of not forcing my “ways of being” onto other people.

**Oppression and Positionality**

While I am fully aware that my self-identification as White and my positionality in the middle-to-upper class socioeconomically position me clearly as an agent in systems of oppression, I also recognize that the times that I have been positioned as a target. Both kinds of positionality are described below.

**Age and gender.** In some ways, I feel that I have been a target of bias as a woman and as a person who chooses to live in what some consider non-traditional ways since my second-marriage. My second husband is much older than I am and was wealthy when I met and married him. Because of our age difference, people have actually said they think that I married my husband for money. No matter how many times I tell the story of how we met and fell in love or how many times people see me with him and taking care of him, many people cannot seem to get past the stereotype they have of me or they cannot comprehend a marriage with such a vast age difference. I feel that I am often looked down on for choosing to live outside of the age norm with regard to marriage. I have learned that no matter what I do to prove myself as a good wife, dedicated care-giver, or decent person, I am continually stereotyped as being less-than-good, -dedicated, or -decent and as having ulterior motives.

In the past five years, my husband’s health has declined due to a progressive neurodegenerative illness called Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. It is a rare illness with
no current treatments. Since he has declined, I have taken over as head of the household to manage the finances, house, and in-home care. This is in direct opposition to the role that was taught to me as a child when the male was the only head of the household. In that role, I have met many challenges. Prior to our marriage, my husband employed two males to drive him to his businesses, help him in the home office, or do work around the house and outside on the grounds. They continued to work at our house after my husband started to decline, however neither took well to my position as I became the primary decision-maker. They did not seem to like having a woman in charge. I eventually asked one of them to leave and the other one chose to leave on his own. While my relationship with new employees seems to be better, the reality is that, in my position of authority as a female, I feel that if I am not constantly vigilant, I am more likely to be taken advantage of than a male.

**Race and ethnicity.** I think of myself as an agent of oppression when it comes to race and social class. My family’s acculturation to White America helped them to achieve many successes and, recognizing this, they were quite intentional in socializing me to be White. They knew that, as a result, I would have privileges and opportunities that others would not have. My successes, as a result of many of these privileges and opportunities, have been a great source of pride for my parents and extended family members. At the same time, I now realize that my successes were because of unearned privileges; thus my privileging was at the cost of others’ disprivileging or oppression. This leads to issues that I am currently working through: Even though I recognize that my privileges in claiming Whiteness are at the expense of others, while it is difficult for me to admit, I do not want to lose those privileges and opportunities. At the same time, I recognize that
holding onto my White identity while not examining the history that led to my
whitification and without using my privilege to challenge unjust structures of power
perpetuates oppression and keeps me from working in solidarity with others to affect
change.

Another example of the role I have played as an agent of racial oppression is with
regard to my lack of awareness of how best to support students of Color when I was
teaching high school. Though I spent extra time helping students with content or
assignments, the African American students in my classes often scored lower than the
White students on tests. However, I was more lenient in grading Black students than
White students. If they attempted to complete their work, tried their best, and showed
consistent improvements, I thought I was helping them by boosting their grades. I realize
now that I did them an injustice by not holding them up to higher expectations and
learning how to help them meet expectations. While they passed my class, I am not sure
they left with the academic skills they needed to be admitted to and succeed in college.

Class. I am also aware that I can very easily be an agent of oppression as an
affluent White person. Being in the position to have household employees automatically
positions me as having privileges and as a potential agent of oppression. As such, I
continually reflect on my positionality as an employer and consider how I might alter
potential instances of oppression: I work to consider the fairness of pay or benefits and I
reflect on my words, actions, or expressions. I realize that, because of my current
socioeconomic status that – just as I realize as a White person - I must continually
recognize and monitor my positionality and reflect on ways I might be oppressing others
or perpetuating oppression.
Conclusion to Chapter Four

This chapter was written as the result of careful analysis of my life’s experiences so that I could develop deeper understandings about how I was socialized to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, faith, age, and language. Race was clearly a dominant identity factor in this process. Identifying ways I have been socialized to be racist or engage in racist practices represents part of the process of developing my own critical sociocultural consciousness. It is clear that, much like the students discussed in the previous chapters, I was firmly socialized to identities situated in Whiteness as normal, as superior.

Writing this chapter and the chapter that follows allowed me to grow in my understanding about, and understanding of, my racial, cultural, and other socialized identities. In the process, my feelings about choosing and identifying solely with one identity have become complex. I have a better understanding of how hybridity complicates cultural identity, and I know that I do not have to choose a race or culture over another (Nieto, 2002) yet I do not yet know how I will reconcile my identities. I am aware that I have assimilated more to White identity because of the privileges I receive and, as I become more aware of these privileges, I become more aware of injustices, especially within the U.S. education, legal, and healthcare system, spaces where White privileges benefit me. I listen to the obstacles that my friends of Color must confront and believe that I have been able to overcome similar obstacles because I identify as White. At the same time, I realize that identifying as White means that I must understand the historical and political nature of my privileges and let go of guilt so I can focus on using those privileges to affect change. With these issues in mind, Chapter Five describes patterns I constructed from this narrative in terms of the growth of my critical sociocultural consciousness.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF MY NARRATIVE: LEARNING ABOUT SELF

The goal of Chapter Four was to construct an autoethnographic narrative that would allow me to reflect on the history of my positionality within various social and cultural identities and, in the process, better understand the development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness as a part of the journey to develop anti-racist behaviors and actions as a teacher educator (Cochran, 2000; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Helms, 1990; and Tatum, 2007). This chapter provides an analysis of that narrative organized according to key themes constructed through that analysis. While a range of identities were explored in Chapter Four, the overwhelming feature of my socialization process is that I grew up normalizing Whiteness. I have come to see this as socialized racism because I understand Whiteness to be a system and ideology of White dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of Color (McIntyre, 2002). I understand it as a standpoint from which Whites reaffirm the belief in the nonexistence of racism, and as a practice that offers rewards that are difficult for those privileged by them to relinquish (Cooks and Simpson, 2007). I also acknowledge that everyone, regardless of his or her racial and ethnic identity, is positioned in relation to Whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Exploring my ethnographic profile has also led to understanding the various ways I am positioned within Whiteness, how that positioning originated and was nurtured throughout my life, and how I am continuously shaped and influenced by it while now
beginning to recognize and push against it. The process of writing about my histories, relationships, and experiences has made me more aware of not only the discriminatory aspects of my life and my identity, but how those aspects may still pose limitations for further understanding systemic discrimination (McIntyre, 1997). Because this has specific implications for the work of EDTE 400 in an African American community, race is the primary focus of this analysis of my socialization narrative.

One of the most powerful insights I gained from reflections on my racial identity has been confronting my conflicting feelings about my Whiteness as embedded in a complex range of racial and ethnic identities as I consider Whiteness, political implications of considering Latina identity, and my Italian American/Latin origins. The mere fact that it is challenging for me to consider these identities has made exploring Whiteness that much more essential and leads me to describe two overarching elements in my process of learning to be White: (a) explicit and embedded lessons in Whiteness, and (b) being socialized to racism, as well as considering (c) Ethnic identity.

**Lessons in Whiteness**

The most pervasive messages I received as a child and into my adulthood were messages that taught me not only that I was White, but that White was preferable to any other race. These lessons in Whiteness resonated from my family’s stories of immigration to America, their acculturation to White, American society, their ways of socializing their children, as well as in my experiences as a beginning teacher. In this section, I name those lessons and describe the ways that my family members and I learned Whiteness as we were taught to: (a) choose to be White, (b) learn to be White, (c) celebrate
culture/reinforce Whiteness, (d) position children in Whiteness, and (e) continually reinforce Whiteness.

**Lesson One: Choose to be White**

The first lessons my father learned when he came to this country from Italy set the stage for the lessons he would later teach his children. A line in one of the first letters my father wrote to his relatives in Italy after he came to America, helped me understand why he felt the need to choose Whiteness as his racial identity: “It is really different here in America. We (Italians) are looked down on by the White Americans, but at least we don’t have it the worst! The Black people are considered the lowest and are treated the worst.” At the time he wrote the letter, my father had already learned not to associate with people of Color if he wanted to be successful in America. He learned that there was a hierarchy of Color in this country and that, if he could avoid being positioned as a person of Color, he had a better chance of blending as White in the future. I identify this as the moment my father’s identity was at a crossroads of being either positioned in Whiteness or in Color. He chose to position himself in Whiteness and then embarked on another journey of acculturation and assimilation into a new White identity in America. Every other experience described in my Chapter Four narrative and unpacked in this chapter builds from that foundation.

**Lesson Two: Learn to be White**

My mother and father and their parents before them learned that in order to be successful in America they needed to assimilate to White American society. The phrases I heard as a child (Table 5.1) ring loud and clear from the stories of my narrative profile as they represent ways that my parents learned to acculturate to Whiteness in order to be
successful in America. Reflecting data presented in Chapter Six, those lessons in assimilation are briefly examined below.

Table 5.1: Phrases I heard as a child that reflect assimilation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn English quickly; Lose your heritage language!</th>
<th>Live in White Suburban neighborhoods!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lose that accent!</td>
<td>Forget about your native land!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shave that moustache!</td>
<td>Italy has nothing left to offer you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t associate with people of Color!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learn English quickly; lose your heritage language!** My father received the message, *Learn English Quickly!* when he was placed in a first grade classroom at the age of 14, the start of his public schooling in America. Out of shame, my father learned English quickly and made it to the grade level associated with his age within a year. This acculturation with regard to learning English became a source of pride for my father and other relatives. It was key to their success in America. If they learned English, and eventually lost their Italian accents, they could more easily blend as White and gain additional opportunities and privileges in America.

Although he spoke Italian to his parents, my father stopped speaking Italian after they died. When my father died in 2008, the Italian language – as it was heard in our family - died with him. The only close relative I have left living who can speak fluent Italian is my 85-year-old uncle who solidly refuses to that our identity might be considered by some to be Latino. He can speak Italian but chooses not to and has no living family member with whom to speak it. Though my family has preserved remnants of Italian culture such as our Italian foods, family gatherings and traditions, and our Catholic faith, the authenticity of Italian culture, meaning the use of the Italian language.
and visits to Italy, has slowly passed away with relatives who immigrated here and who have since passed away themselves.

Look and sound White! My father lost his Italian accent and shaved his moustache when he wanted to win my mother’s heart and hand in marriage. My mother, also of full Italian ethnicity, was not only partial toward a man who acted and looked more White, she said she would not even go out with him unless he whitified his appearance. My parents adopted White American culture by looking and sounding in ways that they perceived as not-of-Color even more so when their children were born. Having considered this socialization, I realize that this type of acculturation shaped my views about the people to whom I should be attracted. To this day, demonstrating a deep enculturation of this lesson in Whiteness, I am most attracted to White males and particularly those who have a mixture of ethnicities of which they are unaware, indifferent to, or have suppressed and who speak English. In other words, I am more attracted to men who look and sound White.

Know that Italy has nothing to offer you! My father went back to visit Italy after he immigrated to America when he was 26-years-old. He did not go back again until he was 72-years-old, and that was only because I begged him to go with me and to show me his home town in Calabria. In those 46 years of not visiting Italy, I heard my father say at least a dozen times, “I don’t plan to go back to Italy. There’s nothing there for me! I came to America for good reason!” I was always curious about Italy and eager to visit so that I could experience some aspects of Italian culture. I believed Italy did have something to offer us, even if it was only remnants of our past. We also still had extended family members living there. I disagreed with my father and could not understand why he
did not take pride in where he was born. I understand this now as yet another way of learning Whiteness. My father began to devalue his Italian heritage and ethnicity in the process of placing more value on being American - from his perspective, essentially White. He and other family members began to see less value in being Italian American in America. Even if they just wanted to identify nationally as American, it involved losing or focusing less on Italian ethnicity and cultural heritage – thus molding into Whiteness.

**Live in White, suburban neighborhoods.** When my father and my mother were married, they moved into an apartment in a part of town where only Whites resided. They later purchased a home in a White, suburban neighborhood in Canton, Ohio – the house in which I lived for the first 18 years of my life. So I grew up in a neighborhood where most of the other families were White and where most of the children I played with were White. Apparently, it was a silent rule to keep the neighborhood free of people of Color. They reinforced this lesson when they moved my grandparents from the urban center of Canton after the robberies, sending a clear message that we were not to live where Black people were becoming more of a presence. This rule became most apparent when my parents broke it many years later by selling their home to a Biracial couple, and as a result, they lost their friends of 46 years. However, it is important to mention and acknowledge that my parents sold their home to a Biracial couple, not because they became more aware about the biases they formed as a result of buying into Whiteness, but rather, as simply a means for financial gain.

**Don’t associate with people of color!** My parents only associated with other Americanized Italians and Whites. They did not have any other friends of Color. Besides the Biracial couple who bought our house, we never had a person of Color other than
Italian Americans in our house. It was expected that no one in our family would bring an African American home. My parents placed me and my brother in parochial schools with student populations of predominantly White children and only White teachers. The after-school or extra-curricular activities in which we participated were populated by mainly White children.

Lesson Three: Celebrate Italian Culture but Only in Ways that Reinforce Whiteness

It is clear that my grandfather, who was one of the first of my relatives to cross the Atlantic Ocean to America, chose to do so to take advantage of the many opportunities he thought would be available for achieving a better quality of life with regard to financial success and security, education, and freedom to achieve more than he experienced in Italy. My grandparents and my father preserved and celebrated their Italian culture but only in ways that reinforced Whiteness. Some of those ways of reinforcing Whiteness are described below, every precious memory and story of my family’s Italian ancestry and ethnicity embedded in and shaped by White Americanism.

American is kind to us, but only because we can blend as White. As a child, I treasured the stories told by family members about their Italian heritage, past lives in Italy, and newly reinvented lives in American. However, these stories were often laced with messages that reinforced appreciation for being White Americans. My grandfather, father, and uncles often spoke of how poor and difficult their lives were in Italy: “They’re from the Old Country. They have experienced really hard times. That can make you cold and hard.” I dreamed of Italy but I was also scared of going there for fear of poverty and hardships and, when I visited Italy as a child, I felt that our Italian ethnicity was not
acknowledged by Italians because we were only seen as White Americans, an identity we
had learned very well. So I saw America as our home, kind to us.

My family saw America as kind to us with regard to employment and financial
stability. My grandfather and great uncles took great pride in their American jobs in
factories and mills or working on the railroad system. They were able to buy houses and
provide for their families and they saw this as a reflection of America’s kindness to
immigrants. The financial opportunities my grandfather gained led to my father’s
expanded financial success which eventually supported my formal education and
additional, enhanced opportunities. Most of these opportunities and successes were
achieved as we succumbed to Whiteness.

**White is better; resist Color.** I now recognize my resistance (and my family’s
resistance) to taking on a non-White identity as a form of discrimination. For most of my
life, however, I was taught not to see it. But the reality is that our shame to be something
other than White (Latino or Black) is reflective of racism because we learned that we are
better as White. I also recognize that some people of Color have also been socialized to
see me as White because of the intersection of race, class, and position and because of the
intentional socialization of Italian Americans to been seen as White. The Ecuadorian
employees working in my house saw me as nothing other than White, but I was their
affluent employer and represented a view of Whiteness as associated with money and
power. In addition, they saw no evidence – in my language or cultural traditions - that I
would be a race other than White. In this way, the same system of White dominance in
which I had been brought up played into the Ecuadorian employees’ resistance to seeing
me as anything other than White.
Lesson Four: Position Children in Whiteness

I was born into Whiteness. Every socialized identity with which I was brought up was framed by Whiteness. My family members and relatives celebrated and were proud of their Italian ethnicity, but their White identities reigned supreme. My parents isolated us within a world of White which reinforced our Whiteness. My parents and extended family members perpetuated socialized racism by continually voicing their stereotypes and prejudices of people of Color or from diverse backgrounds. This meant that we were also socialized to have racist dispositions and practices in order to uphold Whiteness.

Formal education was undoubtedly one of the great teachers of Whiteness for me from childhood through university. My family intentionally chose parochial, White schooling for their children to “keep us focused” which actually meant, to keep us away from children of Color, to position us as White. Even when I attended The Ohio State University, until I chose to interact with diverse groups of people on my own, I was isolated within a White world both academically and socially. From childhood, I learned the lessons of Whiteness so well that there was no doubt in my mind that my race was White.

Lesson Five: Continually Reinforce Whiteness

Lessons in Whiteness did not stop with my formal education or after I left home. It continued as I entered my first teaching job in a high school in a rural area in South Carolina. It was reinforced as I heard White colleagues’ negative views of students of Color and attended professional development meetings that used Payne’s (1996) framework for understanding poverty to reinforce deficit views about students and
families from low income households, students who, in my high school setting were predominantly African American. This indoctrination was further reified when I witnessed students of Color in my school experiencing consistently low test scores, high failure rates, and low graduation rates without the kind of support that would change those statistics. Instead, discussions of student performance were related to a culture of poverty and what students were lacking. Because the student population was largely African American, this perpetuation of deficit views was geared toward the Black students hence, further lessons in Whiteness. Whiteness continued to be reinforced when we were never asked to discuss the positive aspects of students’ cultures, and we were certainly never asked to discuss their race and our misunderstandings and biases.

**Being Socialized to Racism**

Another aspect of the development of my critical consciousness is becoming aware of the ways that, as I have been socialized to Whiteness, I have been simultaneously socialized to racism. Analysis of my narrative profile suggests several elements in that process. Those elements are: (a) legitimizing only White relationships, (b) learning to fear color, (c) valuing only English, (d) acculturating to Whiteness as best, and (e) acknowledging discrimination and inequities.

**Legitimizing Only White Relationships**

One of the expectations most often communicated to me was not to date or fall in love with a person of Color. My parents’ and aunts’ and uncles’ vocal disdain for female cousins or friends of the family who married or had children with men of Color sent clear messages to me never to do either one if I wanted to be accepted by my family and society. I often heard comments such as:
Who is that boy? Is he Black? …Well he’s dark. You better hope your dad doesn’t see you with him.

We’re not racist and have nothing against Black people but don’t you ever bring one home!

These kinds of comments led me to consciously develop negative – racist - views of females who dated men of Color and so I aligned myself with White women dating White men. I also have cousins who dated (and eventually married) Black men, and I could never understand why they wanted to date (or marry) Black men. I became aware of how White people looked negatively at White women who had Biracial children and I often felt sorry for the children. My understandings of my socialization to only have relationships with White men and my observations of the complexity of mixed or biracial relationships (via dating and marriage) worked to legitimize and normalize White relationships.

Fearing Color

Analysis of the events that occurred in my life reflect a clear process in my development of fear of persons of Color, a fear that shaped racist dispositions within me and other persons. When I saw my grandparents as a child, my stereotypical mind’s eye view thought they looked as if they were plucked out of a small village in Calabria, Italy and planted right in front of me. When my parents made comments like, “They’re from the Old Country. They have experienced really hard times. That can make you cold and hard,” I formed notions that Italy was a desolate, poor place where people lived in run-down houses with very few belongings, were hungry and unhappy, and experienced many hardships. I associated the way my grandparents looked and my notions of Italy with people of whom to be fearful. I did not want to be like them or be in such
circumstances. When my father and uncles said that they had no desire to go back to Italy, these instances shaped my view of America as a much kinder, safer, and easier country than other countries.

The events surrounding my grandparents’ robbery provide strong examples of how fear of persons of Color was instilled in me and supported the development of racist dispositions. As a child, I remember feeling fear - after the robberies occurred – about people breaking into our house and hurting us. Though, I do not consciously remember associating those actions with Black people, the fact that the perpetrators were Black was communicated to me so it was certainly a part of the messages I received and internalized. This fear was likely reinforced when I heard family members talk about moving because Black people were moving into their part of town. Now, I recognize this kind of White flight as fear of people of Color along with fear of vanishing White privileges. My parents also instilled fear of Blacks by immersing me in mostly White schools, activities, church, and neighborhoods where fear may have evolved from not knowing any Black people and by messages that may have been sent verbally and visually about people of Color by the White people in those settings.

Valuing Only English

As mentioned earlier, my father took great pride in quickly learning English. At the same time, that pride became a way for him to be less tolerant of people who did not speak English or learn English quickly. He felt that immigrants should learn English right away and, in spite of the fact that he spoke Italian with his parents, he saw English as the one language in America. He often said things like, “If I learned English so quickly, they
can do the same!” and did not consider all of the reasons why many people who immigrate to American have a difficult time learning English.

My mother held similar views of only valuing one language. When she told my father that she would go on a date with him only if he lost his Italian accent, she devalued Italian. When my parents said things like, “We want you and your brother to speak good English. There is no need to speak Italian,” they demonstrated the belief that only one language was necessary for success and that language was English. As a result, they began to lose their ability to speak fluent Italian. My brother and I never learned Italian, and as a result, we speak “good English” and are monolingual. My relatives often spoke negatively of people who did not speak English. This valuing of English while devaluing other languages was a part of socializing me to discrimination with regard to language or linguicism.

Acculturating to Whiteness

Although I discussed Lessons in Whiteness earlier in this chapter, a reiteration of my acculturation to valuing all things White in American society is important as I consider how I was socialized to racist views. The discussion below is an attempt to connect my strong White socialization to the simultaneous development of racist dispositions as my family acculturated into a perspective that placed the greatest value on: (a) one color, and (b) one vision of success.

One color. Looking at my narrative, I see racism as the glue that keeps Whiteness together. My family’s negative responses to the suggestion that we might be Latino - “No we’re not!” and “That is not correct. We are not Latino.” - were further messages to me, that they felt shame for being a race other than White. This reinforced
my understanding that being White was something of which to be proud and that taking on any other non-White identity would be degrading. Assimilating to White America as socialization to racist ways also involved ridiculing people of Color through name-calling or telling jokes. In the process of writing my narrative, I came to see that my father’s joy in telling jokes was his way of assimilating to White America within social settings. As I got older, I recognized these as racist jokes wondering if my father would have shared the same realization. I think it became part of what he did as a White person, embedded, internalized racism which he saw as a vehicle for making people laugh. It became another practice that would situate him, even more, in one color and identity - White.

**One vision of success.** My family’s willingness to lose their Italian culture to assimilate to White American culture was a part of their plan for achieving success. This was also an element in my socialization to racism as I was taught to have one vision of success and that one vision was White. I was socialized to believe that I could only achieve success positioned in my White identity and that my White privileges and opportunities were the only ways for me to achieve these ideals. I believe those privileges and opportunities surfaced most in my formal education experiences as I attended predominately White schools. The view of all White peers in my private grade school, high school, and in my college classrooms reflected the notion that White meant capable, worthy, and successful. It was not until later in my life that I witnessed inequities in schooling as a result of my experiences teaching students from diverse backgrounds. And it was not until much later in life that I understood why these inequities in schooling occurred. As I become more aware of these inequities, I realize just how strongly this vision of success is racist. I recognize it now as part of Whiteness socialization
Ethnic Identity

Examining the history of my positioning and identity development has been an important part of the process of recognizing and continuing to develop a critical sociocultural consciousness. But my journey is far from complete. I recognize that the very fact that I do not yet completely understand the possibility or the political implications of a possible Latina identity is a form of perpetuating racism and oppressive behaviors. If I am honest with myself, I know that I still identify by my deeply embedded Whiteness more than any other identity. This is not easy or comfortable for me to admit but I believe that this recognition is an important step in the ongoing process of developing a critical sociocultural consciousness and leave me with a desire to confront and better understand the political and historical contexts that have built my biases as I continue to figure out the next steps in understanding ethnic and racial identities other than White in my life and my family history.

Conclusion to Chapter Five

Becoming aware of how I am raced or how I have been socialized to be racist helps me to grow not only as a better person but as a better teacher of preservice teachers. As I became more critically aware of the racial discourses of my childhood and the various ways I was socialized to racist dispositions, I became even more aware of the continuous process that deconstructing them entails. I also recognize that I cannot be culturally sensitive and teach culturally responsive ways, if I do not expand my sociocultural consciousness and live in culturally responsive ways in my personal life. These socialization processes allow me to better understand how I might address similar experiences in the lives of preservice teachers.
CHAPTER SIX

PRESERVICE TEACHERS: NARRATIVE PROFILES

With my autoethnographic narrative profile and analysis of that profile as a foundation, this dissertation now turns to research questions that consider the experiences of preservice teachers in EDTE 400. A primary focus of this study was to examine what preservice teachers might learn from a one-credit course designed to help them understand the need for more equitable teaching practices and to help them begin to contradict deficit views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge and capabilities in a low-income African American community. To remind readers of the study’s primary contexts, EDTE 400, *Learning through Community Service*, was a course for preservice teachers (undergraduates at the beginning of their program in the field of education) that included on-campus sessions as well as a community-site-based service learning component called *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. Fifteen of the 126 students taking EDTE 400 chose Ivy Village (a Housing and Urban Development, government funded housing development) as their community site. I focused on eight of those students as primary participants in this study. Four of them are profiled in this chapter.

Creating Student Narratives

This chapter uses narrative profiles to describe four preservice teachers’ experiences in life as well as in EDTE 400. Because student reflection on identity socialization was an important aspect of the course (an assignment and element in their
learning) and also foundational to understanding their responses to the course, large sections of these profiles are devoted to the students’ identities and how they were socialized to them. Each profile concludes with a look at the student’s perspectives on the impact of the EDTE 400 experience. Thus, this chapter offers a foundation to answering two of my research questions (specific patterns in response to these questions are presented in Chapters Seven and Eight):

- What do preservice teachers learn from a one-credit hour undergraduate course developed to support preservice teachers in understanding the need for more equitable literacy practices and, in the process, to promote positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities in a low-income, African-American community?

- What specific elements of the course were supportive of teacher candidates’ learning; what elements impeded learning or were not supportive?

The four primary participants profiled in this chapter were selected because they were active participants in the first two small group interviews, they completed all assignments, and followed all guidelines for the assignments (all of which were collected as data). The students were (pseudonyms used): Hannah Ruth, a White 19-year old female; Elizabeth, a White 19-year old female; Cassandra, a Black 22 year-old female; Diane, a White 19-year old female.

These profiles were constructed based on my pattern analysis of data collected through interview, observation/field notes, and course assignments. The narratives were developed to better understand and present some aspects of participants’ identities and the impact of the course (EDTE 400) on their learning, reflecting the notion that identities are complex as well as socially and culturally situated and mediated (Nieto, 2009). The narratives also reflect participants’ awareness (and in some cases, lack of or limited awareness) of a socialization process by which they acquire their social identities (Harro,
2002), while presenting contradictions and similarities within and across participants’ understandings of themselves and others.

I constructed the narratives in the first person using participants’ words from their written narratives, observations and reflections, transcribed audio-taped interviews, and service learning presentations. After constructing these four narratives, I gave them back to participants for member checking. I asked participants to provide feedback in terms of how well they thought the narratives represented their voice, perspectives, and experiences. I also asked participants to explain any new insights or understandings they might have developed since their participation in EDTE 400 and Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. Those insights were then incorporated back into the narratives.

In spite of these measures, it is important to emphasize that, while each narrative reflects participants’ voices as closely as possible, I chose the structure of the narratives. I did this by arranging sections of data in ways that allowed me to tell fluid stories that I hoped would represent participants’ thoughts and experiences. My intent was to intentionally link themes and patterns that I discerned from a close review of data (Reissman, 2008) through the narratives. Thus, these stories should be read with the knowledge that they represent my shaping of the each participant’s stories. While this chapter presents patterns as discerned from an analysis of data for each of the four profiled students, Chapter Seven looks at patterns across students.

**Hannah Ruth**

I am a 19 year-old White female who was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina. My parents were both born in America; however, my mom grew up overseas in the Philippines. I believe I grew up in a middle class household. My dad was a CPA
(certified public accountant) and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. I have two older brothers. As a child, my family was really involved in our church and school. We have been on a few mission trips through our church, and those trips have really influenced my thinking and made me feel good about myself. I am currently studying middle level education at the university, and I am majoring in Math and Science. My goal after graduation is to teach abroad.

Perceptions of Social Identities and Socialization

Gender. Looking back on my life, it is evident that my parents and society often tried to socialize me into certain roles whether they were aware of it or not. One of the social identities I can most easily pick out is that I was socialized to have characteristics typical of a girl. I often heard the phrase “That’s not lady-like” as I was growing up, as well as having a predominantly pink room as a child which has been my least favorite color as long as I can remember.

Geography. Along with this I feel that I was socialized to be a specific type of woman: a Southern woman. I was raised in Columbia, South Carolina; however, I grew up with one parent who did not have a Southern accent and when I went to school I often had students and even teachers tell me that I should not say “you guys” because it was a Northern saying. My dad is from Virginia, so my Southern influence comes from him. I was basically raised drinking sweet tea like water, so I was socialized to love Southern food which is a huge part of the culture.

Religion. In relation to the Southern culture, I have also attended a Southern Baptist church since I was an infant and so was somewhat socialized into being a Christian. I was socialized as a Christian, because I attended a Christian school and I
attended a Christian church twice a week. Later in my life, I made my own choice regarding religion. My mom was raised in the Philippines and her parents are both Yankees, so I have a little bit of Northern [United States] and Filipino influence in my culture. We eat a lot of food they eat over there.

**Race.** Another area where I can see the effects of socialization in my life is the way I think of myself racially. Growing up, racism was not a large part of my life. My parents raised me to not view people as different because of their race, but when I started attending school, I was taught by my classmates how I was supposed to act because of my race. It was mostly simple things like when talking about the music I liked. My friends told me that I could not like rap music because that was for Black people. I also had teachers who would correct me on my grammar when I was speaking but not say anything to the African-American kids about their grammar, which I feel has made me associate good grammar with Caucasian people and bad grammar with all the other races. I can also see how different interests of mine were discouraged because they were not appropriate for my race. I remember one time I told an adult that I wanted to be a mailman when I grew up and their response was that I could be something better than a mailman and that it was not an appropriate job for me. All the so-called “appropriate” jobs for me required going to college.

**Age group and education.** The last group I identify with is my age group, specifically the college age. My whole life I have watched television shows that depict college students as irresponsible, party-crazy menaces to society. One way I can specifically see the effects of socialization in my life is the fact that I am actually attending a college at this age. As long as I can remember, I have always been working
towards going to college. I cannot even remember a time in my life when I thought that after graduating high school I would do anything other than attend a university. The combination of my upbringing and the high school I went to basically made attending college the only option.

**Oppression and positionality.** I have become more and more aware of oppression through stereotypes, because I have spent time in other countries. I met a woman in Nicaragua who assumed that all Americans were crazy cowboys who wanted to shoot people, which was one of the most shocking things I have ever heard. I have only been on a horse, like, once in my life! I met a lot of people who were shocked that I could communicate with them even though I am not bilingual. They were like, “Americans can’t learn other languages.” I was like, “Yes we can. We just don’t, because we’re lazy.”

In regard to my race, I do not think I belong to a target group because generally Caucasian people have the higher jobs and more power, especially in the South. I feel that, to a degree, my age group is a target of oppression. We constantly deal with student loan companies and credit card companies trying to take advantage of us as well as dealing with people judging us by negative stereotypes. A lady I met in Nicaragua flat out told me that she was terrified of all these college kids coming down, because her parents taught her that Americans were evil. I thought that was insane.

**Perspectives on Teaching and Cultural Diversity in Education**

I think teachers who teach children from diverse backgrounds should embrace children’s cultures instead of smothering them with their own or dominant culture. I think a person can learn more when they learn about other peoples’ cultures. I was raised
and socialized into my culture but I feel like I make my own culture by picking what I like from other peoples’s cultures and making it part of my life. I like to eat a lot of Mexican food, but I was not raised doing that. It is a part of Mexican culture that I appreciate and like, so I made it a part of my life. I feel like I kind of blended my culture and Mexican culture together. I think if you are going to be a teacher and you do not love being around diversity, you are going to fail to teach effectively. I think it is really important to be able to respect other cultures and appreciate how unique they are.

**Perspectives on Experiences with People from Diverse Backgrounds**

As I previously mentioned, I went to a private Christian school and we had a huge residence program where we had a lot of people attending the school from different parts of Asia as well as some people from the Ivory Coast of Africa. Being around them helped us learn that we had to respect the other cultures. There were a lot of teachers who assumed that all the Sashan students already knew all the stuff that we were learning, but I knew that they didn’t because they would ask me questions about stuff. So I think I learned a lot about respecting other cultures by watching how my teachers stereotyped the other students. I learned that it is important to appreciate other peoples’ cultures in the classroom because otherwise you are going to alienate them. I have had some good and bad experiences being around people from different races and cultures. I think I am comfortable with them all just because I am comfortable with who I am as a person. I like learning about other peoples’ beliefs and learning about them.

In the past couple years, I have gone on a few mission trips to various places in the United States and in other countries. Recently I was in Nicaragua on another mission trip. I love Nicaraguan culture! When I went to Nicaragua this past summer, I had
children patting my hair because it was soft and they were wondering why I got sun burnt. It was really different. The mission trips I have been on are more like service trips rather than trips where we solely go and tell people about Jesus. So when I went to Nicaragua, I think we brought fifteen trunks with us. These were huge trunks filled with food, clothing, and books we bought for the kids while we were there. We also ran day camps for the kids who could not afford to go to school. So we were teaching them as we were also learning about them. We would ask them questions about their city and about what they did in school. We built relationships with them and also shared our beliefs with them. I am always being careful to do it in a way that does not make them feel that their beliefs are wrong.

Many of the people we worked with in Nicaragua were raised Catholic. There were a lot of Catholic churches in the city. I was in a city called Ocotal which is a really poor city. One of the neighborhoods we went to was one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the entire country, which we did not find out until after we spent time there. So there were a lot of drug deals going on while I was in Ocotal. You could even smell the marijuana in the air. It was not a big deal for the kids living there, because they are being raised around it and they will eventually do drugs or run drug deals themselves. It was a different setting from what I am used to, because I would see kids go into houses while their parents were in there selling drugs to whoever was buying them. I met a lot of kids who were Biracial because American men had come and raped their moms and all this other horrible stuff, but I was always careful not to be judgemental of them.

I also did missions work this summer in a low income housing in Hilton Head and the kids I worked with were a mixture of White, Biracial, Hispanic and Black kids.
There was not a single child that I met this summer who had both of their parents living together and some did not even know both of their parents. Some were living with their grand parents.

**Participating in On-Site Community Component of EDTE 400**

**Initial thoughts.** Initially, when I found out that I had to take a service learning class I was a little hesitant, primarily because I was worried about finding the time to get all of the hours done. I originally chose EdVenture, a children’s museum in Columbia, as my first service learning choice. Ms. Lisa asked me to consider serving instead in the second choice I had listed, which was *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. I agreed to serve in this site and once I started to think about it, I started to get excited about meeting the kids that I would be working with for the semester. This past summer I spent a lot of time working with some kids in a day camp at different government housing areas, and I loved it! So I was really excited about giving back to the community. I was more excited about specifically working with a reading program, because as a kid I read a ton and I think that helped me excel in school. Also, I was excited to have the opportunity to invest in the lives of the kids that I would be working with, and I hoped to see that time impact their lives for the better.

Before I started serving hours in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, I was thinking about how the kids and families would view me. I had hoped that the kids would see me as someone who wanted to get to know them and spend time with them, rather than a person who had to be there or who was getting paid to be there. I thought that if the kids knew I was not getting paid, they would realize that I wanted to be there. I found in the past that kids’ attitudes are a bit different towards adults if they feel like the
adults are just there because it is their job. I was really excited about starting to work with the kids and I knew that even if I tried to teach them some, I would also learn from them.

**Preconceived notions of the children and families of Ivy Village.** Going into the housing area for the first time, I expected that there would be a large Hispanic population living there, because when I worked in areas like this before most of the kids were Hispanic or Multiracial. I expected that most kids would come from single parent homes. I also had a preconception that the kids in Ivy Village, and their families, would not think that education or reading was important. I thought it would be difficult to get my child partner to read. I assumed that younger kids were not interested in learning. I expected to see what I had seen before, which tended to be a bunch of kids, who for the most part, were neglected by their parents and on their own most of the time.

**Dispelling stereotypes.** I worked with a girl named Sasha during Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ sessions and she was a lot of fun to work with. This past summer I worked in a low income area and met a lot of Biracial kids there, so I was kind of surprised that Sasha and most of the other kids at Ivy Village were African American. I have also never worked with children this young, and I was a little worried before we started that we wouldn’t have anything to talk about. Sasha was actually the most outgoing 10 year-old I have ever met. She wanted to get to know me and was always asking me questions. She talked about anything that popped into her head and we never ran out of things to talk about.

We started the first session of the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners making a book about our lives, which was the literacy craft for the day, and it was a really neat way
to get to know about her family. I thought the kids from Ivy Village would come from broken homes, because when I worked at my other job this past summer, I rarely met a kid who lived with both parents. I learned that Sasha and her brothers and sister live together and are close. I learned that other kids in Ivy Village actually lived with both of their biological parents. I was surprised to see that the kids there were so well taken care of, and I learned that Sasha spent a lot of time with her extended family. I learned that Sasha loves her family more than anything else. She is the oldest in her family and I am the youngest, so we talked about how that affected our roles in our families. I learned that Sasha is bossy and I think it’s because she’s the oldest in her family. She was also able to make decisions about what book we would read or what we would do during a literacy activity without even being asked.

We had a lot of activities that allowed us time to talk to each other about things we liked or disliked. I found out that she wants to be a singer or a cosmetologist depending on how she feels at that moment. She loves to dance. She loves reading but dislikes English class. She also loves being around people. One day we did an activity with food in which we read and followed instructions to make mouths out of apple slices, peanut butter, and marshmallows. After we made it, Sasha literally dipped everything in peanut butter just to see if it tasted good. We also talked about Sasha’s favorite classes in school and what she likes to do in her free time. We discovered that we both really liked math classes and reading. I found out that she also likes making money and likes to write her name with dollar signs. I thought it was funny, because she was adamant about letting me know that she did it before the music pop artist, Ke$ha started doing it!
We also read a lot during *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. We read from *Goosebumps* books and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books, and she told me about all the other books she has read. I was really impressed when we were talking about different books and she was able to tell me every book she had read by R.L. Stine and what each one of them was about. I actually like many of the books Sasha picked out for us to read and was always impressed with how much of the plot she remembered. I was also impressed by her reading skills. I remember that I hated reading out loud when I was her age, but she reads very well and very dramatically. I was also surprised at how many times she would stop while reading and talk about a part in the book that reminded her of her life and experiences. Sasha was so inquisitive and was always asking questions. I think this is because she really wants to learn about everything she possibly can. I had so much fun getting to know Sasha. She has a great personality and seems very confident about herself.

I think people assume that some kids won’t amount to anything, but my little girl told me that she is going to graduate from high school and then go live with her grandmother in New York so she can attend college there. I originally didn’t have any expectations of these kids’ parents and their influences in their children’s lives before working with Sasha, and I now realize how wrong I was. I learned that Sasha’s mom told her that she either had to go to college or join the military after she graduates from high school. I think this has really motivated her to do well in school because she told me many times that she wanted to go to college.

**Learning from on-site community component of EDTE 400.** The highlights of my service learning in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* was primarily getting to know
all of the kids and hanging out with Sasha. We had a lot of fun and I loved getting to hear about her life. I learned a lot about how important it is to know about students’ backgrounds so that I can understand them better. I learned that the kids at Ivy Village really wanted to learn. I know I need to not have the assumption that kids don’t want to learn. Kids do want to learn and it’s important to kids that you actually listen to them and show them that you care. I would often ask Sasha about her week. I would usually ask her about specific things she had previously told me that she was excited about doing. In this way, I think I expressed to her that I did care about her enough to remember her life outside of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. I was reminded through this experience of how important it is to recognize that sometimes kids just need to release their energy instead of being forced to sit down for long periods of time. I will definitely continue thinking of ways to let that happen within my future classroom.

**Impact of EDTE 400: Class Sessions on Campus**

I think I was prepared to talk about diversity issues in EDTE 400 because these topics have come up in other classes I have taken. We have talked a lot about oppression, race, and culture in my EDFN 300 class. We actually did bring up a lot of socialization stuff. I do not know where I have discussed oppression before but I know I have discussed it and have seen the effects of it on people. The thing I remember the most from EDTE 400 was the “Danger of a Single Story” video. I think that video was awesome and really reminded me that I had to remember that the literature I have grown up with hasn't always reflected the diversity of the world around me.

I think that the service learning blog (Appendix E) definitely helped because it forced us to really reflect on what we were learning from our interactions with the kids in
our site. Having us reflect on our own cultures and experience was great because it helped us be able to identify diversity in my own life before having to perceive it in other people’s lives. I think this course combined with my service learning experience really reminded me of how important educators are as well as how important it is to be the best educator I can be. I have always planned on being as unbiased as possible within my future classroom in order to support every child in getting the education they deserve. These experiences reaffirmed my belief that every child, regardless of his or her home situation or how much in taxes his or her parents pay, deserves the best education possible. I also hope that when I do start teaching, that those students will be as excited about learning as the kids I met at Ivy Village. I think it is important to believe deep down inside that every kid does want to learn. I was reminded in this course and service experience of how important it is to remember that we, as teachers, will always be learning from our students as well as learning with them.

Elizabeth

I am a 19 year-old female from Pennsylvania. I had lived there my entire life until I enrolled in college at the University of South Carolina. I am a sophomore in college and majoring in elementary education. I hope to teach second and third grades in the future. I am the seventh of eight children in my family. My dad is a lawyer and my mom is a stay-at-home mom, so I am part of a middle-to-upper class family.

Perceptions of Social Identities and Socialization

Gender. I am a female and I have been since the minute I was born. I had no control or say in whether I wanted to be a girl. As a female, my greatest influence, as far as socialization goes, would be my mother. Before I could make decisions for myself my
mother made them for me. That being said, the influences of media, television, peers, coworkers, and family members socialized my mother to believe that outfitting a female child in skirts, blouses, and dresses and having them play with Barbies is rightfully appropriate. As I grew older, I found that my mother was less concerned with imposing these ideas onto me, allowing me to freely choose what I wanted to wear and play with. I am one of eight kids; five of them are older brothers. I believe my brothers also played a big role in my socialization as a female. I wore hand-me-down clothes from my male siblings. They encouraged me to play in the mud and snow with them, but I was never socialized to see this as a negative thing. My mother and father equally supported my interests once I was able to form my own likes and dislikes. As I have developed as a female, peers and media have showcased the stereotypical traits I should possess, but the people whose opinions matter most to me have not socialized me to believe these ideas. So I find ease in rejecting these ignorant accusations.

**Race.** In addition to being female, I am also White. My culture is White, though suburban and Pennsylvanian as well. These aspects of my identity have shaped my family’s traditions and values. I don’t believe my family has intentionally socialized me to think negatively about other people’s races, but they have influenced my opinions with comments they have made. I never really paid much attention to skin color until I was in fourth grade and 9/11 happened. I came home from school that day and the news was on; they were trying to identify the group of people that attacked the world trade centers. Someone in my family said, “It probably was the Japanese.” How could a group of people do something so hateful? I couldn’t help but feel repulsed toward whoever had done this. I have been socialized by media and peers and even my family to dislike those
who do wrong to others, so if a group inflicts hurt and suffering onto others, regardless if they are Black, White, Brown, or even Green, I would find dissatisfaction in their actions and wouldn’t even consider race as a factor. I can’t say that I don’t fall victim to believing stereotypes. In Five Points, even during the day, I find myself avoiding Black men who are walking the streets. I am ashamed to admit this, but I have been socialized to see them as threatening. My father has socialized me to think this way because he is a lawyer in the city and deals with many cases involving Black men who have used violence against innocent people. His job experiences have revealed these evils to him and he has socialized me to be cautious.

**Age.** My age, 19, is another social identity that I possess. Ever since I can remember my mother has told me to “act my age” which has socialized me to believe that if I don’t do this then people will look at me negatively. Media and peers have showcased that immaturity is not a desirable trait when trying to be taken seriously. Even my parents, employers, and teachers have led me to believe this. Whenever I acted immature I was reprimanded which only reinforced that acting my age is a duty I am supposed to uphold. My mother and father always stressed to me that I should act my age and respect those who are older and more mature than I am, for they have more life experience and knowledge than me. As I become older, I will gain these life experiences as well and be more knowledgeable in regards to the world. But that comes with time and responsibility – as my mother always said.

**Social class.** Economic class is another one of my social identities right along with gender, race, and age. I am part of the middle class, and being one of eight kids, I have been socialized by my parents to value everything I have. My parents have made it
very clear that they work very hard for everything our family has and it shouldn’t be wasted. I understand the value of a dollar and hard work, my parents made me get a job as soon as I could to illustrate this point. I have been socialized by kids at school, TV shows, movies and books, that middle class is just average; you’re not rich but you’re not poor. I have also been socialized by television and magazines to be envious of those who are rich. Rich people get to enjoy their monetary surplus by indulging themselves - as my grandmother always told me.

**Ability.** Lastly, ability status plays into one’s social identity. I am an abled young adult. I have always been encouraged to be independent and capable. Teachers, coaches, my parents, friends, and relatives have always encouraged me to be successful and pointed out that I am lucky to have good health. My brother is mentally disabled but my family has socialized him just like they have me. I have been taught to try hard, be determined, and accomplish my goals because I have nothing to hold me back but myself. I have been encouraged so much that I do not consider myself to be anything but able. I have been socialized to always put forth my best effort, because media associates lack of effort with wasted ability and that is an undesirable trait.

**Oppression and positionality.** In EDTE 400, I learned that our gender, race, age, economic class, and ability status are social identities that predispose us to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression (Harro, 2002). Being a female predisposes me to be a target in society because women are viewed as inferior to men. People are socialized to believe a man can do the same job better than I can. Because of this, I am a target in the system of oppression and this will continue to happen because we are the victims of the cycle, and we are playing our roles as victims to keep the cycle alive. On
the other hand, although I am a target, I am also an agent because I am White. My gender positions me as a target while my race positions me as an agent. Blacks and Hispanics are viewed as an inferior race. Others are socialized to believe that Whites are superior and that Blacks and Hispanics are less intelligent and determined. My race positions me as an agent to oppress others while my gender results in oppression. It is all part of the system where there are agents who oppress the targets. Oppression is a vicious cycle that society seems to be unable to break.

**Perspectives on Teaching and Cultural Diversity in Education**

I understand culture as a set of traditions, things that you have been doing for a long time. Race does play a factor, but I’m sure that African American people do the same things. Like, I’m sure African Americans have many holiday traditions that are similar to White people’s traditions. Culture is a set of things practiced with relatives or family members. I think culture and diversity are so important to my preparation to teach and in my role as a future educator. If you don’t understand where others come from, especially your students, how are you supposed to forge relationships with them or gain their trust? I believe building a trusting relationship with students is important in teaching. If you don’t have that openness with your students, then you won’t be successful with them. It’s the difference between helping a student succeed or passing them off to fail. Students pick up on that and if you’re not engaged with them, then why are they going to be engaged with you?

I have never had a negative experience with people from different racial and ethnic groups, just like I have never had one with White people. If anything, I am grateful of my experiences with people from different racial or ethnic groups, because
they help me to break down walls that I have built up in my head, like ideas that I had no
grounds to have or opinions that I didn’t know why I had. Experiences I have had since
being in college, have allowed me to think about where I came from. Like I said, I hardly
had any experiences with people from different racial groups before I came to college.
There were only five African American students in my school. I interacted with them.
But they knew they were the minority, so it made it weird. I feel no discomfort at all
around people from different racial groups. I’m not going to act like I’m scared of kids
from other races, but Freedom Readers Literacy Partners helped me to not feel that way.
I don’t even see those kids (who live in Ivy Village) as Colored at all.

**Perspectives on Experiences with People from Diverse Backgrounds**

I was never really exposed to different cultures or races before I came to college.
I went to a high school where there were hardly any students from diverse backgrounds.
My high school consisted of about 2,000 students, and about 12 of them were African
American. I wasn’t very comfortable with African Americans, because I didn’t spend a
lot of time with them. Then I switched from that and came to the University of South
Carolina where it is probably 50/50. It’s so different from what I am used to. I know
everyone has biases and stereotypes but when it comes down to it, you’re really not any
different just because your skin is a different color or you eat certain foods. I think it is
important to be exposed to different races.

**Participating in On-Site Community Component of EDTE 400**

**Initial thoughts.** When I first realized this course was a service learning based, I
became really concerned because I was uncomfortable with the idea of having to
complete so many service hours (20 hours) in addition to my regular course load. Aside
from this concern, I was really looking forward to this experience because I have never participated in a program like *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. It was my first choice for community service. I was eager to meet the children at Ivy Village and to create bonds with them. I thought my love of children mixed with my desire to help others was really going to help me succeed throughout this course. I wanted to get the most out of this experience as possible. I thought that if this experience was a good one, that I would continue to participate in service learning activities beyond this course.

Ideally, upon entering this experience, I wanted the children who I interacted with to feel comfortable with me. I thought that if they feel like I am approachable and interesting then they would most likely be more interested in the activities and tasks we would be doing in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* throughout the semester. I wanted them to feel like I was listening to them and their ideas, not just fulfilling an academic requirement for this course. I wanted the kids to know that I was choosing to be there just as much as I was required to be there. I hoped that they would view me as a positive role model who they could look up to. I figured that I was young enough to have fun and play around with the kids, but that they would hopefully respect me like I planned to respect them. I was really looking forward to starting this service learning based experience so I could engage with the kids and develop skills for working with children.

*Preconceived notions of the children and families of Ivy Village.* Before we started participating in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, I assumed that we would partner with predominantly Black children, but I didn’t realize that it would be all African American. Of course I was surprised but it didn’t turn me away from wanting to
form relationships with them. I assumed since it was in a low income housing
development center that the kids were going to be disrespectful and would not have good
family lives. I assumed the worst. I assumed that the kids would not want us there, be
uninterested in reading, and uninterested in working with us.

**Biases.** I had a few biases going into this service experience. I thought that lower
privileged kids would not be determined to meet their goals or go to college. I was also
nervous from watching TV shows, and I’ve seen the confrontational side and don’t want
to be judgmental, but there is a tendency that White people bury how they really feel.
And going into it I was like, well what if they respond negatively because I’m White and
short? They will probably be bigger than me and not listen to me.

I was also worried about the age of my child partner in *Freedom Readers
Literacy Partners.* I was afraid I would get paired with a child who was in middle
school. I assumed that it would be more difficult to get along with a child in that age
group because I thought that they might be harder to please. I knew I felt more
comfortable with younger children, like under the age of 10. I thought I would set a good
example as a literacy partner in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* and that I would be a
role model. I expected to be an educational asset and a friend to these kids. I wanted to
interact with them more than in just reading books with them. I figured I was going to
have to talk to them and form a relationship with them.

**Dispelling stereotypes.** The first day of *Freedom Readers* was interesting. All
of us participated in an interactive BINGO interest inventory activity (Appendix I) where
we engaged with the kids and found things we had in common with each other. Some of
the questions were things like, “What is your favorite movie, your birth month, your
favorite restaurant?” Based on how many things we had in common with a child is how we were paired with them. I was paired with a girl named Sam who was in seventh grade. Sam immediately found interest in a book, *The Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen. She disproved my stereotype of middle school kids right away. Before I started working with her, I assumed that middle school girls were snobby and awkward, but Sam was mature for her age. Regardless of age I was so pleased when she found interest in *The Hatchet*, because I didn’t know she would be such an avid reader. This showed me that she wanted to be active in participating in the program.

Since Sam was the oldest child there, the other kids looked up to her. She had a strong personality and always kept her younger brother, who was also participating in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, in check. When we had time to talk during sessions, Sam wouldn’t exactly tell me what she liked. I didn’t want her to think I was treating her like a science experiment, so sometimes I would observe her with her friends and learn about her that way. We made a booklet together during one session in which we wrote about our families, interests, hopes and dreams. That day I learned that Sam wants to be the first in her family to go to college and graduate. I also learned that she wants a successful career. One of the most fun days I had at *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* was when we arrived at Ivy Village to see a group of long tables set up in the parking lot. Volunteers were setting up colorful table cloths outside and placing Easter egg dying kits and dozens of Easter eggs on them. Sam was not able to make it to this session, but I still had a lot of fun helping the other kids pick out which colors to use and which stickers to put on the eggs. They also participated in the Easter egg hunt. I really
enjoyed the excitement on the kids’ faces as they ran around outside to find plastic eggs filled with candy.

Although Sam was not there that day, I really enjoyed this session because I was able to focus on interacting with the other children. I was able to learn more about the other children’s personalities. For instance, I learned that Sasha often talks about money because that is something she sees as important to her. This is comical for a 10 year old, but it showed me that she has motivation to earn money and determination is a good quality for a growing child. She told me that one day she wants a good job so she can make a lot of money. I also learned that Solomon, who is actually Sam’s younger brother, is on the basketball team at his school because he had to leave early to go to a basketball game. I noticed that five year-old Maeva had a great time searching for eggs which showed me that she has an active and adventurous side. Sienna, Sasha’s younger sister, mentioned that she ate Easter dinner at her grandmother’s house with her whole family which leads me to believe that she values her family time. Little experiences like these that occurred through interactions during Freedom Readers Literacy Partners showed me children’s values and interests. I realized that I inadvertently learned so much about these children just by talking and interacting with them each week.

The final day of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners was dedicated to various outdoor activities. Although no reading took place on this day, it was important because I got to spend one last time interacting with all of the kids. Before Sam arrived, I was able to write her a letter telling her how proud I was of all of her accomplishments at Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. I felt good to write the note because I wanted Sam to feel encouraged for putting in efforts every week. The children grabbed pizza, fruit, and other
snacks before we went outside for the games. The kids got to split up into two teams, which divided them evenly age-wise. We did a balloon popping contest, a race, and a water balloon toss. Our team won two of the contests and it was fun celebrating with the kids. They genuinely enjoyed it. At the end I gave Sam her letter and watched her read it. She gave me a big hug and thanked me. All the students were eager to hug me goodbye and tell me that they would miss me which made me feel very fortunate.

Ms. Lisa asked me during an interview one day why I thought I interacted more with the children at Ivy Village than the other preservice teachers participating in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. I remember thinking that I was only going to get out of this what I put into it. I knew this course was supposed to be enriching, and instead of dragging my feet, I wanted to make the most of it. I saw the others isolating themselves before sessions began, and I didn’t want the kids to think that we didn’t want to be here. So I always went outside to play with the little girls. I enjoyed talking with them about whatever or doing cartwheels with them. They seemed to enjoy it. I made sure I spoke with several of the kids of different ages. Sometimes I would just sit at the picnic table outside of the community center and talk with the middle school girls about their day at school or about things that they liked. Sometimes we made fun of the USC boys and the Ivy Village boys playing basketball. We were really just joking, but we laughed a lot and had fun with it. I believe the kids really liked *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* and enjoyed us being there.

That final day at Ivy Village showed me just how far I had come to know these children. It was a great experience to see them having so much fun together in a community that does not have the luxuries that many of us take for granted. Each of the
kids were laughing and smiling the whole time during sessions. This final day kind of summed up the whole experience for me because it showed me how far I have come in my journey to get to know the kids. Initially I was hesitant about even engaging in this experience because I was afraid that being White would make the children not want to get to know me. I thought that they would think I was different or wouldn’t like the same things as them because I’m not African American like them. I learned that these children accepted me for who I am, regardless of the color of my skin. I was foolish to be scared of them. I have been pushed to think beyond how I have been socialized. I have learned that patience and trust play huge factors in building educational relationships among students. My experiences in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners have shown me that children learn at different rates and shouldn’t be faulted for it. Overall, I have learned about my own values and how I want to impact my own students one day.

**Learning from on-site community component of EDTE 400.** A few of the highlights from my experience participating in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners was from my interactions with Maeva, the five year old I previously mentioned. Maeva was the youngest child in the program, and I looked forward to seeing her each week because she was such a character. I noticed Maeva the first week of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners because I was trying to read her facial expressions. Although she appeared to be very expressive each week, I didn’t see her smile until the third week of sessions. That week she was riding around on her scooter before our session and I saw her go over speed bumps with no fear, so I decided to compliment her by telling her how good I thought she was on her scooter. As soon as I told her how cool I thought she looked riding her scooter, a big smile crossed her face and it was really special for me. She was
so happy that I had noticed. From that week on Maeva and I became friends, and she would laugh and play with me out on the basketball court each week before sessions began.

This experience made me expand my views on learning because I was exposed to hands on interaction with students. It was invaluable to be paired with African American children and to be able to work with them on a personal level. I learned a lot about my values through this service learning experience. I have put greater emphasis on the bonds teachers must make with their students. I have learned that trust plays a factor in how a child learns, because they need to feel open and comfortable enough to make mistakes and ask questions. Also, I have seen how kindness can make all the difference in a child’s attitude toward learning. If I approach my students in a kind but assertive manner, they will establish respect for me but I will still be approachable.

**Impact of EDTE 400: Class Sessions on Campus**

I took a lot from the course, EDTE 400. My opinion on socialization now is so different compared to when I came into the course. When we read and talked about social identities and socialization, I began to think about how I have been socialized and how it has impacted my life today and shaped the person that I have become. When I take a look in the mirror I now know why I feel the way I do about certain aspects of our world. I see how my upbringing has shaped my outlook on life. It was really difficult for me to talk about stereotypes based on different races just because there were people from other races in our classroom. I’m not ashamed at all though; that was how I was raised, so I’m not going to hate myself. In turn, I am more conscious of how my peers and future students’ backgrounds and socialization have shaped their beliefs, opinions,
attitudes, and dispositions on various aspects in the world. The identity narrative (Appendix D) was specifically helpful because it reinforced the idea of socialization. Creating a personal narrative allowed me to further my understandings of what socialization actually is and how it creates our identities. It was important because in reflecting on myself I gained better insight on how socialization has impacted others and shaped their own identities. The reading about why identity matters reinforced the importance of personal reflection and identity. Listening to the speech, “The Danger of a Single Story,” was awesome! I really enjoyed this because it gave great insight into how others have been faced with adversity. It made me realize that everyone has their own life and upbringing and how important it is to realize if you want to impact their lives in some way.

I thought it was important to think about culture and diversity too because it brought the whole theme of the class to life. After having interacted with these children for an extended period of time, it was really neat to be able to finally sit down and reflect on how cultures and diversity play into the large scheme of things. I learned more about myself as well as those surrounding me. I learned that providing counter-narratives was important because it calls for a greater evaluation of things and a deeper understanding of people. Service learning reflections were also really important because they kept me refreshed and conscious of what was going on each week I visited Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. It was a way for me to think about the kids and the events that had occurred during the session we had together once I left. They were mainly important because I could develop ideas I hadn't considered while hands on interacting with the kids. I learned a lot about myself through the end-of-semester service learning shares
(Appendix F) in the sense that I hadn't realized prior to this experience. I learned that it is possible to reach every child; it's just a matter of HOW to reach them. This was a great time to reflect and share to the class while gaining new information through other students’ experiences as well.

The experiences I had participating in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners helped me think about the issues we discussed in class. Experience is different than reading about it. I don’t think I would have gotten as much out of the course if I hadn’t participated in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners because it’s more intimate with a small group of kids. I enjoyed my time working with Ms. Lisa and all of the children at Ivy Village. I would love to volunteer again with Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. The kids were great! My experiences in EDTE 400/Freedom Readers opened my eyes to see the bigger picture and I feel more well-rounded because of it.

Cassandra

I am a 22-year-old Black female. I was born in Georgia but grew up in South Carolina. I am majoring in mathematics. I have tried out different schools and different majors, and I finally feel like I am in the right field. I want to be a high school math teacher. I plan to get my masters at the University of South Carolina as well. I like to travel and hope to see many places around the world. The farthest I have been is Hawaii. I am Christian. My father is a lawyer and my mom is an elementary school teacher. I always considered our family to be in an upper-middle class socioeconomic class. I have one older sister. I was raised as a Southern Baptist, and my family was, and still is, very involved in our church.
Perceptions of Social Identities and Socialization

Gender. Since I was born, social identities have shaped who I am and the behavior I exhibit. These social identities are abstract human characteristics that are developed by human society in order to help classify people in a particular culture as normal or abnormal. Each social identity that I take on puts me in one or two groups: an agent or a target. Agents are people who reap the benefits of society and oppress others, and targets are those who are oppressed. My first social identity falls under the category of gender. My gender is that of a woman. To be socialized as a woman, I have been taught that I should take a passive role when it comes to forming romantic relationships. This element of my socialization was strongly encouraged by my family, particularly my parents and older sister. I was taught that as a woman, I should allow the man to pursue me, and that I should not do any pursuing. I have also been socialized by society to know how to cook, clean, and take care of babies. I have rejected some aspects of what society has taught me to be as a woman. I know how to cook some things, I choose not to clean very often, and I have a general idea of how to take care of babies. I have been taught by my family and society that a woman should dress and look “feminine.” This means that as a woman, I should have a nice, curvy, yet, thin body, a pretty face, hairless legs and axilla, wear dresses and skirts when dressing nice, allow someone to stab my earlobes all the way through so that I may hang jewelry from them, paint my nails, put makeup on my face, and get my hair done. Some of these things I have rejected, such as wearing makeup and painting my nails, but most of the other things I have internalized and believe I must follow in order to have the gender of a woman. Society has also taught me that as a woman, I am responsible for being sexy, for sexually attracting a man. This
means dressing in tight clothes, revealing clothes, high heels, and having a flirtatious, yet passive, personality. As a woman, I feel like I do have to be sexy in order to get a man, but a lot of times I decide that I do not care and choose to be comfortable. I would prefer to have a man that would want me when I am comfortable instead of only when I am “sexy.”

**Race.** My second social identity falls under the category of race. My race is Black. Ideally, I do not want to be seen as a Black person. I want to be seen as a person. However, living in the United States of America, it is likely that I will always be seen as a Black person by people in every race. Nevertheless, I have been socialized to be Black. My parents encourage me to date Black men, especially my father. I reject this idea because I would date and marry a man of any race. As a Black person, I have been socialized by my family and other Black people to think that everyone who is not Black is racist towards Black people. Based on my experiences and the experiences of others, I believe this is true, but I am trying to change my perspective on this for my own emotional well-being. I have been socialized by other Black people that to be Black means you have to “act Black.” Acting Black involves using improper grammar, speaking with an aggressive tone, listening to music made by Black people, not being good academically, not being interested in formal education, and eating soul food. I have two specific examples of this that I remember. One time was when I was in the tenth grade after school waiting for my bus to arrive to take me home. I usually stood and talked with my friends who were White while waiting every day. One day my bus came, and I walked to it, passing a group of Black girls that I did not know. One of them said to me, “Have a nice day.” I replied, “Thanks. You too.” As I walked passed, I heard one of
them say, “She White,” while another one responded, “She is not White,” in my defense. Another memory I have was when I was a teenager and I was applying for a job at Tokyo Grill, a Japanese restaurant. There was a Black man eating in the restaurant, and he said to me, “Why are you applying for a job at Tokyo Grill? Shouldn’t you be applying at KFC?” I laughed it off at the time, but shortly afterwards I realized just how racist his comment was. Now, I try to make it a point to make myself racially neutral. I try to talk so that if someone heard me but did not see me, they would only know that I was an American, not my “race.” I also am not ashamed or afraid to express my pleasure for things that are not stereotypically associated with Black people, such as my attraction to men who are not Black or my liking music or movies not made by Black people.

**Age.** A third social identity I have is age. I am currently 22 years old, which puts me in the category of a young adult. As such, I have been taught by society (but not my parents) that I should want to drink alcohol. I have never consumed alcohol and do not know if I ever will. I have also been socialized by society that I should be on my own and starting my life, enjoying being single, and having a lot of fun. I am still in college and will not start my career until I am at least 24 (most likely). I am single but would prefer to be married right now if the circumstances were right (which they are not), and I like to have fun, but not the amount of typical, late night, wild fun that people expect me to have.

**Sexual orientation.** A fourth social identity I have is under sexual orientation. I am a heterosexual. As such, I have been socialized to think that people who are not heterosexual are odd. I do think that people who are not heterosexual are odd, and I feel some discomfort being around them, but I am trying to shake that feeling. I have also
been socialized by society that I should not look or behave like a lesbian, especially not a “butch” lesbian. This means that I should wear women’s clothing, not men’s clothing, and I should not do anything sexual with another female, such as make out with her or be naked with her. I do not have the desire to be sexual with another female, but I do like to wear men’s clothes sometimes. They are quite comfortable and tend to cover up more of my body, which is convenient when I feel like being conservative with the amount of skin I show.

**Religion.** A fifth social identity I possess is religion. I am a Christian. As such, I have been socialized to believe in Christian values, which I do. I have also been socialized by some peers that I should read and follow what is in *The Bible*. I have read some of *The Bible*, but I do not agree with everything that is in it. As a Christian, I have a conflict between what I believe and what *The Bible* says is true. I have also been socialized by my father and my pastor that I should come to church every Sunday. I do not like church, so I usually choose not to go. As a Christian, I have been socialized by other Christians to be nice and do good for other people, which I choose to do because I like doing it and I believe it is the right thing to do.

**Oppression and positionality.** My social identities of being a woman and being Black both make me a target, a victim of oppression in the United States. As a Black woman, I have the unfortunate status of being a target of sexism and racism. As a woman, I am predisposed to make less money than men and to be less respected than men. I am expected to be subordinate to men and to follow a man’s lead. As a Black person, I am predisposed to make less money than other people, to have a harder time finding a husband than other women, and to be mistreated by the law. As a Black
woman, there is a glass ceiling that America has created for me, but I intend to smash through it.

**Perspectives on Teaching and Cultural Diversity in Education**

When I hear the word “diversity” in the context of education, I think of racial diversity, a lot of races, like White, Black, Asian, Hispanic. When I think about the word “culture,” I think that it represents things that you learn and things that you also put out there or share with other people. It’s kind of hard to have a solid definition, but it’s all the things that you experience in life that kind of make you who you are, help you determine what you do and what you believe. It represents your actions, language, religion and just all sorts of things, like political beliefs, what country you are from, and your ideas about whatever. When I think of my culture I always think of myself as an American, like American culture, and with that it’s like I believe in freedom for people, equality, and democracy. I believe in being able to achieve a lot, have lots of opportunities and feel, not necessarily proud of my country, but a loyalty, like I’m an American. I feel glad about that. I feel connected to that. And I guess part of that culture is being a Southerner. I feel that my Southern culture is, you know, the food I eat like sweet tea and collard greens and stuff like that, warm weather, biking, going outside in nature, and trying to be polite to people. To me, my culture is more regional and national. I think music is part of my culture, like American music. I guess I like R&B. I listen to a lot of Rap or Rock. Other countries listen to different types of music. And also, my religion is a part of my culture; being a Christian plays a big part of who I am, my beliefs, and how I try to behave and stuff. Culture is not only nationality and ethnicity, it’s made up of subcultures. I feel like that as an American, I don’t have a
culture like other people from different countries. Stuff they have is really different and it’s obvious what their culture is, but if I look at myself I say, “Ok, what is my culture?” I don’t know.

I think it’s important for teachers to know about culture and about other people’s experiences and how they perceive things. As a teacher, it’s important to recognize different people, feel comfortable with different people, and feel comfortable with different methods of teaching. But you can’t do everything, like teach every single different method for every student in the class. So there’s a point where you recognize the different cultures but that this is how most of the class is going to go down and how the teaching method is going to be. You know, you have to lay down the law, because you can’t have chaos in the classroom or have kids saying it should be this way or that way. You’re the teacher, you’re the leader, and you have to have control of the class. So you have to be sensitive to the people in the classroom and respect everybody, but you also have to think about what’s going to be best for the class and how to make sure that there is a set law. You have to have expectations like, “This is what I expect you to do, and you have to do it.”

**Perspectives on race discussions.** Race, for example, is a topic I do not think needs to be discussed. I remember I spoke with Ms. Reid after class one day to ask her why she thought it was important to talk about race with students. I told her that I thought it wasn’t good to acknowledge the racial aspect of kids because we should treat them equally. I brought up one thing she said in class, that you should ask others what they would like to be referred to as, like in my case, African American or Black. I explained to her that I would prefer people to see me as a person, but if I had to choose I
would choose being referred to as Black. I just think that when you are in a classroom with a bunch of students and realize that it is a diverse group, like White, Asian, and Black, you should just look at everybody as being students, treat everybody equally, and not talk about race. I mean, it might be ok to talk about race as long as you’re talking about it in a sense to unify different races. But I don’t think it is good to talk about as something to distinguish, like this race is like this and everything. For example, I was in a government class my twelfth grade year and my teacher was talking about White people in the past. He said something about “our ancestors did blah blah blah…” and me and another Black person were the only Black students in the class. He pointed at us and said, “It’s not your ancestors.” And so, I felt really angry about that. I didn’t come to class to get singled out for my race. And what did he know about my ancestors? I have White ancestors. Like who are you to talk about my ancestors or point me out in class and race? I feel like that wasn’t helpful at all, like I mean you can’t generalize us versus them. Racism is present but a lot of people don’t see it or the effect of their actions on other people.

**Perspectives on Experiences with People from Diverse Backgrounds**

I have had experiences with people from diverse backgrounds. On a friendship level, it has been fine. I really haven’t known too many people who weren’t White or Black, but even then, the few that I have known have been fine. With White people I feel like my experiences have been good. For example, I’ve had a lot of White friends, but the really good friends that have stuck by me and stand with me are all Black. So this all makes me wonder why my White friends don’t stick around. Is it because of racism? Like why is it that my Black friends are still around and my White ones are not? In
relationships and stuff, Black guys have approached me but White guys haven’t. Well, they did like twice before, but that was when I was in preschool. I mean, I feel like Whites are racist towards Black people.

I went to schools with predominately White students and only a handful of other races. I went to high school in Columbia, where there were more Black students, and I experienced a lot of racism from them. I guess it was maybe because I was in upper level classes and was always around Whites. There were only White students in upper level classes. I always felt very uncomfortable around the Black people and felt like they disliked me. The Black females called me White. I mean there is nothing wrong with being called White, but they did it in a bad way which is very hurtful. I didn’t even talk to them or know them. So I felt like it was hard to go to that group because I felt more comfortable with White people than with the Black people.

Now as an adult, I have relationships with White people but feel like maybe they are not as strong as I perceive them to be. They are more like superficial and on the surface. They pretend to be nice. Now I feel stuck with the expectations of being a Black person. I’m supposed to be friends with other Black people and be close with them, but I’m not “down” so to speak. I don’t care. I just want some good, decent friends to be around that are good, quality people. I don’t care what color they are. For some people that is very important and I don’t understand.
Participating in On-Site Community Component of EDTE 400

Initial thoughts. I knew from the description of the EDTE 400 sites list (Appendix L) that Ivy Village Apartments was a low income housing development. My mom told me that it was low income, government housing, and my sister told me that I better watch out when I go over there. She said it was kind of the hood and that the residents were ghetto, and I believed her. She knows more about that because her friends are more, like, different and they kind of know more gangster things, so I trusted her on it. I also heard from other friends that the apartment complex was dangerous and that I should be careful.

Preconceived notions of the children of Ivy Village. I got lost when I went to Ivy Village the first time. I was driving around and I was thinking that the place didn’t look bad at all. The kids were playing basketball and there were rocking chairs and stuff. I was wondering what my sister was talking about. Now that I’ve gone there, I don’t feel like it’s dangerous or that I have to watch out at all. I feel like maybe it’s just a low income government housing unit that gets stereotyped by people. I’m glad I know that it’s not like that. I was afraid and nervous. I was afraid that I would not make it to my service learning site on time. Initially, I was afraid that I would not meet in the right place at Ivy Village Apartments. I was also afraid that I would not be able to do anything meaningful in my site. I was afraid that I would be bored, or that I would have a bad experience. I tend to get anxiety easily. I was nervous about being a literacy partner because I’m a math major. I was good in English and took AP classes, but I thought I was going to have to teach kids how to read and I don’t know how to do that. Even
though I was worried, I had decided that I was going to give it my best shot. In a way, I was also excited about what this service learning opportunity could provide.

_Biases and assumptions_. We were asked in EDTE 400 to think about our biases before entering into our service sites. The only bias I felt I had was that I favored people who speak Standard American English. Essentially, I am biased to prefer people like me. I made a few assumptions before I started my service at Ivy Village. I expected that the children would be poor and not very intelligent. I expected that most of them would not know how to read or would be very bad at reading. I also expected that most of the children would be Black.

I thought that I would be viewed with skepticism when I entered this experience. I believed the children would see me as looking different from most of the other USC students who were at the service learning site. I thought that they might treat me differently, either by acting too familiar with me or by distancing themselves from me. I also thought that my age would have an effect on what the children thought of me. Because I am a young adult, I thought that they would look up to me but might not necessarily give me the respect that I deserve. I thought it would take a lot of effort for me to earn the children’s respect. I knew that this service learning experience was necessary for me to feel comfortable teaching people. I anticipated that it would be awkward at first, but I thought it would be a good experience and help me to better understand myself as an educator.

_Experience at Freedom Readers Literacy Partners_. One the first days of the service learning experience at Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, I was given an agenda. When we were given the agenda, I felt even more nervous. I was hoping that I
did everything right and was able to lead the children correctly. We had to introduce ourselves to the children and their mothers. We had to say our name, age and major/grade. There were USC students there who were younger than me, but there were a couple who were my age or older. Many children showed up. Their ages ranged from five to 13. The children also had to introduce themselves. The first activity involved talking to the kids through a Bingo game (Appendix I). During the Bingo game I was apprehensive, but I forced myself to be outgoing and talk to the children so that I could complete my game. I got to know and like some of them, but not getting a child made me feel a little bad, like I was not compatible with anyone. Most children paired up with USC students based on commonalities, and others were assigned a partner by Ms. Reid and Ms. Bea. I think I was the last person to be paired with a child. She was an 11 year old female named Nasheka, and I was at least relieved that she was one of the older children. We gradually got to know each other and she was very sweet. She read pretty well, too, but without expression.

Around the mid-point of my *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* experience, I would go outside and play basketball with the children and the USC students. The boys were rather outgoing and seemed to know each other very well. The boys liked to play basketball and somehow thought that I was good at basketball, which I am not. I made a strong effort and did my best to guard a very tall USC man. I really was taking the game serious. One time the ball was going out of bounds, so in my attempt to throw it back in bounds, I fell and tumbled down the hill, getting sand all in my pants. It was pretty funny! I think playing basketball before the sessions helped me to learn more about the
children’s personalities. It also helped the children and USC students feel more comfortable with each other since we could have fun together.

The children were given food to eat at the beginning of the sessions. The USC students were given an agenda and had to sign in. I told my child what the agenda was for the day. We read *The Hunger Games* together. She would do the reading, and I would correct her if she mispronounced a word. We made connections from the book to the world. At the end of the sessions, I would ask my child where she wanted to read in the book for next time. Whatever she decided, I read during the week and was prepared for the next day. My child was more introverted, but she liked to read. She already read *The Hunger Games*, so she explained the basic premise of the book to me. However, the more she read, it seemed the worse she got at reading. She tended to trip over words more, hesitate, and mispronounce frequently. She also still read with a flat affect.

Toward the end of my service, my child stopped showing up to *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. I was a bit concerned. I was hoping everything was ok. I was also worried that I would not have anyone to work with. I stopped playing basketball outside, but instead stayed inside and helped set up. I also got to know the female USC students a little bit. Ms. Reid encouraged me to try to work with a little boy who was showing up, but he never wanted to work with me or talk to me. I did not like trying to work with the little boy. Apparently he was sexist and did not want to work with a female, so he hardly spoke to me when I spoke to him and he refused to work with me. This made me feel agitated. I ended up working with one of the USC students and his child that I felt comfortable with during the Bingo game. He was a fourth grade boy. We often helped him with his homework before sessions began. He frequently misread things or put down
the wrong answers. When we read books, he would read aloud. He was very slow at reading. When I worked with this boy, I was annoyed that he was doing so poorly at reading and at doing his homework. I felt like he was not trying and could have done better, especially since I was a good reader and homework-doer at his age.

Another time I worked with a different boy who was 12 years old. He was very outgoing, friendly, silly, and a good, animated reader. He was easily distracted, however. Working with this boy was refreshing in a sense, since he actually agreed to work with me. And his reading was very good. I thought he could be an actor or comedian or something, based on the way he read, understood what was going on, vocally delivered what was going on, and even added to what was going on. His distractibility was an annoyance. Working with the two boys, I have learned that my teaching practices will require a lot of patience to deal with students who do not do well academically or do not pay attention when they need to pay attention.

I really enjoyed the activities Ms. Reid gave us during Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. I enjoyed drawing characters from a book on the basketball court with chalk. I drew a duck-like character from a Dr. Seuss book, and I got a lot of compliments on it. I also enjoyed helping the children dye their eggs during the Easter celebration because it made me feel like a real leader and that I could talk to the children with confidence. I also enjoyed reading with one of the boys and watching him read enthusiastically. We even did different accents while we read the book which was fun. I enjoyed getting to read The Hunger Games. I ended up reading the majority of the book to its completion and seeing the movie in the same weekend.
Learning from on-site community component of EDTE 400. I learned a lot about the children at Ivy Village as a result of my experiences partnering with them. I learned that a lot of them had siblings; many of these siblings were half siblings. I also learned that many of the children did not have a father present or living with them. I saw some of the mothers, and a lot of the mothers looked rather young to me. Some of the children did not speak Standard American English, and one child used the “n” word, which made me feel embarrassed and disappointed. A couple of the kids I worked with enjoyed reading. I have learned that when children take control of their reading by choosing their own reading material or acting out what they are reading, then they enjoy reading more. I do not think reading should be forced, because otherwise, it will probably not be fun. Children should have options about what they want to read, and those options should not just include fiction books. I hope that the children at Ivy Village become better readers.

Gaining insights about self and role as educator. This service learning experience made me realize that some children can be very nice, but I am sure that I do not want to work with them. They are too young, and their material is too simple. Also, I do not want to teach English, which I already knew. I know I want to teach older people, such as high school or college students, and I want to teach mathematics. I have realized that as an educator I am laid back. I kind of let the students take charge and if they needed help or needed to be corrected, then I stepped in. I think it gave the student more confidence if they were not being told what to do all of the time, and it increased their leadership skills when they felt they had control over themselves. I also realized that I am a nice educator, and that I do a good job of trying to get to know my students
and making them feel comfortable with me. I am also honest, and I am not afraid to admit when I do not know the answer to something, which I think is a good quality.

**Reshaping perspectives on teaching and learning.** Like I said, this service learning experience reassured me that I know I do not want to work with young children. Their attention spans are very short, the information that they are able to learn is too elementary, and they are shy even to the point of rudeness. Students should be able to do as much on their own as possible. I believe teachers are there more for guidance and direction, but they should not be holding the student's hand the whole way. When I read with my student, she did most of the reading out loud. Only when she got tired did I start to read. That way the student gets more practice. Teachers should be there to build students' confidence, not break it down. If my student mispronounced something minor and kept reading, I did not stop to correct her. This is because I did not want to stop her flow and the confidence she was feeling to point out a mistake she made. Only when she was seriously struggling with a word and totally botched the pronunciation of the word did I come in and help or correct her. Teachers should feel comfortable doing whatever they ask their students to do. This will give the student a sense that the teacher and his/her assignments are fair. For instance, when we read and had to draw pictures of what we read in chalk on the basketball court, I also drew with my students. I did not correct or aid their drawing. I drew my own drawings related to the book so that we worked as a team and everyone had freedom of creativity. I noticed that children either prefer a teacher of the same sex or a male teacher. I do not have any research to back this up, but I speculate that is because they see males as more fun. This is interesting to me because children are raised primarily by their mothers in this country. I do not know if
Engaging with children in ways that are not academic helps build trusting relationships. I enjoyed playing basketball with the children, and it helped me get to know the ones that played better. I also think it helped them get to know me. Having a wide selection of reading materials is important. This thought just coming to my head right now: I think at young ages, children should be able to choose what they want to read. Thus, reading will become fun and entertaining for them. As they get older, then children should be reading classic literature while they are in school (they can read whatever they want outside of school) so that they will know of classic stories, characters and authors. Getting feedback from other teachers or from an adviser can be quite helpful. It gave me ideas of how to work with children and direction with how to approach children when I was lost. Children need more time to really get comfortable with a teacher. Meeting once a week for an hour or hour and a half for several weeks is not enough time to really get to know the student, or for the student to get to know the teachers. Children also need more time to improve their reading skills. The amount of time we spent in Freedom Readers was not long enough or frequent enough to really get the students into reading.

**Impact of EDTE 400: Class Sessions on Campus**

I was prepared to discuss issues of socialization, social identities, oppression, race, culture, and identity in EDTE 400. I guess they never occurred to me before, but I’m glad we did talk about them. They’re good topics to discuss, and I learned a lot about myself through the process.
**Learning about self.** These topics opened my eyes to what I’m like as a person. I think religion was one of the most difficult things we kind of talked about in class, just because you know, it’s always a really touchy subject. I don’t like people to question my religion or my beliefs, and that has happened in the past. It has always been very uncomfortable. When we talked about our social identities in small groups during an EDTE 400 class session, both of the girls who were in my group were Agnostic. Well of course I don’t agree with that, but I’m not going to put them down about their religious beliefs or whatever. So they were looking at me like I’m Christian and looking at me like it may be wrong. I just felt that way. They didn’t say anything like that, but I could feel a kind of tension between us with the different points of views. So yeah, religion is always touchy with me and I don’t like to discuss it with people who have a different belief. You can be a Christian, like Baptist or Methodist, and do what you want. I don’t want to judge.

**Learning about oppression.** When we discussed oppression, I realized even more that being Black in the USA, particularly the South, pretty much automatically makes one a target. Socialization has many more difficulties for Black Americans just because they are Black. From the time they are born in this country, they are already at a disadvantage because of this social construct called race, and how strong racism is in this country. Thus, oppression follows a Black American in some way, shape, or form. It is hard to describe who I am as a person. It seems like there is so little to say, or at least so little that I want to share. There is a lot that encompasses me, but it is hard to pinpoint things.
I thought the speech, “The Danger of a Single Story,” was very interesting. I agree that people should not make assumptions about whole groups of people based on one story they have heard. At my previous university, I was around a lot of African immigrants, including professors and students. They are all very different people with different personalities, and most of them I met were very nice people. One of my African professors told me about the struggles she faced as an African immigrant to the United States. I think many, if not most, of the struggles people face are because people make assumptions about other people that are oftentimes incorrect. I too find it frustrating when people refer to Africa as a country or when they think anyone is supposed to act a certain way. People are individuals with their own experiences and perceptions, and they are free to behave any way they choose. Every African is not poor. Every Mexican is not an illegal immigrant. Every American is not privileged. People need to free themselves from assumptions. Instead, people need to develop the courage to ask people about themselves and find out the truth about a person.

Constructing counter-narratives (Appendix F) as a result of home/community visits is a good practice. It was an eye-opener for me. It was also pretty difficult. Service learning blog (Appendix E) reflections helped me learn about myself, but I do not think that they are very practical for preparation for life as a teacher. We cannot do reflections on every child we encountered every day and each activity that we did a teachers. I liked responding to focus group interview questions about culture, diversity, and experiences with people from diverse backgrounds. I felt like I got to share my story, and that is very important. Because we all have such diverse experiences, I think it was good for Ms. Reid to interview us and learn about our experiences throughout
school, especially the negative experiences. I think that this helps a teacher become more enlightened as to what different students may be going through. The responses from other participants were quite interesting.

**Diane**

I am a 19 year-old, Southern White, Christian, middle-class female from Charleston, SC. I am a sophomore English major with a secondary education cognate. I plan to become a high school English teacher once I graduate from graduate school with a master’s degree in secondary education. My father is the vice president of a bank and my mother is a registered nurse. I have two siblings: a younger brother and an older sister.

**Perceptions of Social Identities and Socialization**

**Gender and age group.** I was taught my gender from the moment I was born. My parents dressed me in pink dresses, pierced my ears at a young age, and signed me up for cheerleading before I could hardly walk. The steps my parents took were not the only ones that conditioned me to act in the female gender. The society around me also molded me to act in certain ways: women are supposed to walk a certain way, talk a certain way, and act a certain way. The same principles applied for different ages because whenever you enter into new age groups, society has different expectations for the specific age. As a nineteen-year-old, I am expected to be somewhat mature and to go to college. Being a college student, watching other college students has socialized and taught me how to be a college student.

**Race, geography, and religion.** As a White southerner, I have been taught to recognize race as something that distinguishes and sometimes creates a difference
between people by the way people of different races are treated and talked about in the South. Being a Christian and growing up in a Christian church my whole life, has definitely taught me certain practices, rules, and behaviors that Christians should follow. For example, cursing, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco were all things that were conditioned in my head to be wrong. It was also almost just as wrong to not pray before every meal, tithe regularly, and refrain from reading your Bible on a regular basis. Not only did the people of my church instill these behaviors in me, but they also instilled my belief in Christ. Being raised in a middle-class home, I never had the mentality that I could just buy anything and everything I wanted. I was brought up to believe that you have to work hard for everything you want.

I believe that my religion has predisposed me to be a target for today’s society. Most people view Christianity as a mix of hypocrites who just want to shove their beliefs down other people’s throats while the majority of Christians are quite the opposite. When people who are not Christians find out that I am, they normally become much more standoffish and closed-off. Also, if you try to talk to someone about God or religion, more often than not, those people will immediately shut you down because they do not want to hear anything that has to do with Christians. I don’t feel like, as a whole, Christians oppress others. I feel like Christians are the ones being oppressed because people judge us.

**Oppression.** Being a female, I am both an agent and a target. Women often target males, society, or inanimate objects as the source of their problems. Alternately, females often feel targeted by society. Today, women still struggle with men thinking they’re not competent enough to serve in higher authority powers. Additionally, there is
still some sort of a standard for women to get married, have children, and take care of the home. While I am not saying this idea is right or wrong, it is still a demand that is present and some women find it to be oppressive.

**Perspectives on Teaching and Cultural Diversity in Education**

When I think of diversity in the context of education, I kind of think about different ways that you can teach, like being diverse in your teaching. This would include things like, don’t always do lectures, do movies and stuff like that. I think that culture is also the things that your parents teach you like saying, “yes ma’am or no ma’am,” because that’s like southern culture not like northern. So those are the things, like different mannerisms and stuff, that can be part of your culture. And like different habits that form you, like the ones that make sense, are part of your culture. I think different mannerisms and habits are a result of what you have been through and experiences that you have had. When I think of my culture, I think of my different social identities, like how old I am and what gender I am. I think of those kind of things, like the religion I practice. That shapes who I am. If you practice different religions, then men and women follow different things like habits and mannerisms. You know, the things that women go through form a different female culture than a male culture. I also think of the fact that I was raised in the South, and how I was raised by both of my parents not just one parent, and how I had an older brother. That all changes things, like if I was an only child that would change things. So there are types of things that we go through that shape culture. Yeah, I guess if you think about culture more deeply, you could think about nationality and ethnicity. You could even think about subcultures.
I think it is important to consider different cultures and backgrounds when you are a teacher so you know what different cultures are out there and you’re sensitive to them. It is important not to have this one track mind, like this is how I was brought up, because everyone is different and even within the same race everyone is different. So if you bring in all the other races, and there are so many different cultures, you really need to be sensitive and need to educate yourself on what it was like for those people. You need to think about what it was like in their life, and it may not be that different from mine but it’s different. You need to respect that and understand that. I did find it difficult to understand what kind of identities the children of Ivy Village come from and what kind of things formed them to be who they are. It was difficult to understand how to relate to them, because my partner and I were very different. It was hard to figure out what we had in common and to connect with her.

**Perspectives on race.** In regard to race, I feel like if people discriminate against other people because of who they are dating or who they choose to marry based on their race, that’s racist and I feel like a lot of people don’t realize that. I feel like if you say, “I’m not going to date this person because he is White or this girl because she is Asian or Black or this guy because of whatever,” that is racism and I feel people don’t realize that. It’s a very big social problem because there is nothing wrong with having interracial relationships at all and having a romantic relationship is part of being human and that’s like something that everybody is geared towards having - a romantic partner. So I feel like for people to discriminate based on race is not progressive for the human race and it’s going to limit couples and a population and going to spread hatred and there is no
need because we are all the same. So if you’re a male and you’re a female, you shouldn’t discriminate about a person’s race.

**Perspectives on Experiences with People from Diverse Backgrounds**

In the past, I found that my relationships with other races were difficult. I grew up near Charleston, South Carolina. The high school I went to was mostly White. Then the high school integrated with another school district, like a government district, so their school was shut down, and they were like an hour from our school. So they had to send buses out at five o’clock in the morning to get them because their school was shut down. It got to the point where it was 60% Black to 40% White, and even then, it was hard to have a relationship with a Black person because they had their own culture, they had their own things, and the White people weren’t allowed to be part of it. There were tensions in the school. We all sat in different places and if you went over to talk to them, everyone would get quiet and be like, “What is she doing over here?” It would happen vice versa, but I could only see it from my side. I was in a class my senior year and one really popular Black girl was in it. It was interesting to get to know her. We got along really well, but I thought if we didn’t have this class together we would have never gotten to know each other. The other races kind of stuck together.

We really didn’t go to them but they didn’t come to us either so we were all racist towards each other in a way. We were also divided between academic levels, like AP and Honors versus Tech prep, which had a lot to do with it. We had a fair amount of Whites in the lower levels, but we didn’t have a lot of Blacks in the upper levels. Social cliques also played a role in how races were divided. Popular White groups didn’t have Black people in them. If a White person walked up to a popular Black group, they would
be like, “What are you doing?” It was interesting to see that we had this Black guy who got along really well with us. He didn’t really get along with the Black people. I don’t know why. I guess his personality didn’t really fit with theirs. But when he would try to cross over to the Black group, he was more accepted because he was Black. He wasn’t looked down on because he hung out with us or was in the upper level classes and not with them in lower level classes. I found it frustrating that Black groups wouldn’t accept a White person in them. Like one day in the lunch room, I walked over and said something to that popular Black girl I got to know in that one class. Her friends got quiet, and it was just really awkward. I didn’t do that again. That experience kind of changed my views and I’m sure it changed hers. It gave us more experiences.

**Participating in On-Site Community Component of EDTE 400**

**Initial thoughts.** I previously participated in community service before, due to honor societies and my service sorority. I have enjoyed participating in these activities, but I have never done any type of community service that correlated with my education or any of my classes. I was initially worried that I may mess up something during this experience that will negatively affect my schoolwork and/or grades. Going into this work site, Freedom Readers Literacy Program, I was anxious to see what kind of impact I would have on the children and the children would have on me. I was also curious as to how this experience would help me in my future career plans as a high school English teacher. Since I worked with younger children (ages 5-13), I was afraid I wouldn’t learn anything about teaching high school students.

**Preconceived notions of the children and families of Ivy Village.** Prior to my participation in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, I didn’t really expect that most of
the children in the low income housing would be Black children. I maybe thought we were going to an apartment complex where they were having problems. An assumption I had of being a literacy partner was that I kind of expected to be a baby sitter and a tutor. Like, I thought I was going to help them do their homework and correct them when they read. I was somewhat hesitant about engaging in service learning. I listed Freedom Readers Literacy Partners as my second service learning site but Ms. Reid asked me if I would consider it as my first. Honestly, I didn’t think the kids would be able to understand a lot of things or pick up on a lot of things when reading books because of their young age.

I hoped to be viewed as a role model to these students. As a college student coming to these children, who may or may not be in the position to go to college, I hoped to inspire them to consider college as something that is not an unattainable goal. I wanted to serve as a reminder that hard work and perseverance pays off. I also hoped to be viewed as a mentor. I wanted the child who I tutored to feel like she could come to me for any advice and with any problem. It is explained in the hierarchy of needs that a student’s basic needs have to be met in order for them to achieve higher levels of thinking. I hoped that if there was something that is preventing these kids from learning, I am or the other college students involved are able to help these children.

**Dispelling stereotypes.** My first time reading with Kara, my Freedom Readers’ buddy, was honestly uncomfortable. She is an African American female fourth-grader. Ms. Reid told me that Kara sought me out as her buddy and specifically wanted to be paired with me above all the other USC students. Knowing that, I felt pressured to live up to whatever expectations Kara had of me. Thus, our first time together was a little
awkward as I was unsure how to act and she was not yet comfortable being herself around me. We had a few conversations that felt stilted and forced; I would ask her how she was or what she was doing this weekend and she would mostly offer only one-word responses. I was hoping that Kara would feel less shy and okay with opening up to me and we would both be able to interact comfortably with each other.

When I reflected on my first experience at Ivy Village and my first interaction with Kara, I realized that I was not as sensitive or as understanding of her reactions to me as I should have been. When things felt awkward and uncomfortable, I should have been trying harder to make her feel comfortable, rather than focusing solely on how I was feeling. Instead of getting frustrated with her short responses, I should have pushed harder, in a gentle way, to turn her short responses into longer ones. Instead of feeling pressured because Kara specifically wanted me as her partner, I should have considered her feelings and how she may have felt meeting with me for the first time. I know when I was her age, I was extremely shy and could not imagine opening up easily to someone older coming to visit me once a week. Kara and I had a lot of conversations, not about school, and that was really cool. I wasn’t looking forward to the whole experience, but Kara was a really cool fourth grader who can read at such an amazing level. I only had to correct her on a few things and it was cool to see that. She adapted to things quickly, like if I read in a animated voice she would read in an animated voice. One moment I really enjoyed was when I successfully explained to her something. I don’t remember what I was explaining to her, but I remember thinking that she wouldn’t understand me. However, she was able to comprehend what I was trying to teach her without me putting the concept in “dumber” terms.
We had a Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ session on Valentine’s Day and we did a few festive things for the kids at Ivy Village. One thing we did that was my favorite was when we paired up with other literacy buddies and created a poem about Valentine’s Day. It was supposed to be a haiku, so the students had to remember what type of poem a haiku was. They also had to follow the guidelines to make sure they had everything right. It was fun for me, especially as an English major, to watch them figure out the syllables and rhyme schemes. All the groups had to present their poems and we created a contest out of it. The way to win the contest was to have the most creative poem and to be the most energetic or dramatic while reading the poem out loud as a group. Kara and the other Ivy Village children were very excited and enthusiastic to scream and yell their poem to win the contest. All of the kids did a great job and adhered to the qualifications of both the contest and writing the haiku.

I feel like when I first heard the Valentine’s Day assignment, I thought that it was going to be difficult for the children, and even sometimes difficult for me, to come up with poems. I also did not even think the children would know what a haiku was, so I was surprised when they not only knew what a haiku was but was able to come up with the different parts for it. They seemed really excited to do this exercise which made me really happy. Normally, I feel like kids don’t like to create poetry, so it was a cool experience to see them get excited. However, I feel like since I had a group of all girls, the excitement level was high. Poetry is kind of considered a “girly” thing, so I can only imagine how a group of boys felt about the assignment. This made me think more about the idea of the stereotypical gender differences that we have been talking about in my EDFN 300 class.
One day when Kara was absent from Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, I worked with a five-year-old girl named Maeva. It was really different to work with someone so much younger than Kara, especially since I had reservations about working with someone as young as Kara. At first it was really difficult for me to connect with Maeva because I didn’t really know what level she was on, or even supposed to be on, so I just sat back and watched her interact with her sister for a little bit. Her sister is a few years older than her and I could tell that Maeva looked up to her. Maeva would copy things her sister would do. For example, when her sister was done eating so was Maeva, even if she still had food on her plate. Maeva even tried to pick out the same book that her sister did, but Maeva was not on the same reading level as her so she could not read it. In my Anthropology class, we talked one day about the differences in the way males and females interact and communicate. The video we watched showed two girls and two boys talking in a room by themselves. The girls would face each other and find things to talk about that they both could relate to. The boys, however, would sit beside each other, not face one another, and almost try to “one-up” the other in their stories and experiences. I think it’s interesting to compare this to the way Maeva and her sister interacted with each other. Maeva tried to be just like her sister, which is the stereotypical way that females interact with one another. I also witnessed this type of interaction when I first met with Kara. Everything that I said was my favorite, she claimed it was hers as well. Later I learned that we didn’t share the same interests that she claimed we did, but I figured that she was trying to relate to me when she told me these things about herself.
On one of the last days at Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, I found out that Kara had a cell-phone. This discovery shocked me because I did not get my own cell-phone until I was in the sixth grade. Even when I got my own phone, it was nothing special, just an older model of a Nokia phone. Kara had a Blackberry smart phone, which I was amazed by. I only recently got my own smart phone this past summer. It really opened my eyes to how young children are being exposed to technology. One of the other children at Freedom Readers Literacy Partners would always ask to see his buddy’s cell phone so he could play games on it. Some of the games he would play were the same ones I have played on my phone, and it embarrassed me when I saw that his mediocre scores were above my highest scores.

One of the most enjoyable visits to Freedom Readers for me was when we did our Easter celebration. We planned a lot of fun things for the kids and it was really exciting for me to see them have so much fun. We planned an egg hunt, where we hid over 100 eggs in the front and the back of the apartment’s clubhouse. Some of the eggs had candy, while some of them contained sentences where they had to identify different parts of speech. Those eggs were my favorite because they had to deal with English education. After the egg hunt we had tables set up outside for the children to dye Easter eggs. The kids were so excited for both of these events, even more excited than they have been the whole semester for anything else. When I saw them run out of the clubhouse to go hunt eggs, it reminded me of how excited I used to get over Easter egg hunts and other holiday festivities. I feel like as you get older this excitement fades, so it’s really fun to see young children get excited over the small things.
Learning from on-site community component of EDTE 400. One of the highlights for me of the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners experience was getting to step outside of my comfort zone. Initially, I was not comfortable going into this service project because I underestimated both my buddy and myself. I think I assumed that the kids who lived there were not going to be smart or be able to read well. I had expectations about the children because of their age group. I thought I was going to have to talk everything down, and I do have to with some things because they can’t possibly understand everything, but they can understand more than I thought. I was surprised that the kids were well behaved. I guess I didn’t expect that either. I didn’t think that I would be able to reach Kara to the point that we could “hang out” every week. I assumed that Kara would not be smart because of her age. These assumptions were totally wrong because Kara really surprised me in her reading and comprehension abilities. She is a really smart girl. I feel kind of silly that I initially thought these things, because the kids at Ivy Village are really smart and easily picked up on things. This memory really changed the way I viewed Kara and others her age. It was all just a really cool experience and I’m glad the kids proved me wrong.

This experience really did not change my thoughts on my career much at all. I went into this experience knowing that if I do end up teaching, I did not want to teach younger kids, only high school students. After this experience, I still feel the same way; I only want to teach high school students. While a lot of my preconceptions about younger children were changed, I do not feel like the elementary or middle schools levels are the right place for me. I guess I don’t really feel confident in myself or my teaching abilities to effectively teach younger children. As their teacher, I would be responsible for laying
down the groundwork and foundations for their education as they go further on in life. However, this experience taught me that I do not have to worry so much about getting the children to like me. While I do want my students to like me, it is more important that I try to reach them, educationally, on a level that they will understand and, thus, be able to learn from.

**Impact of EDTE 400: Class Sessions on Campus**

I wasn’t really expecting us to go into the type of discussions we did in EDTE 400, but I didn’t feel it strange to talk about socialization and social identities. I have never thought of my social identities so when we talked about that, it was really eye opening to think about the things you accept or don’t question because you’re a southerner or a woman. I just accept them and do not think about it. Now I wonder what is my opinion about things versus what I have been taught and how I’ve been taught that so suddenly. I feel like what I learned in EDTE 400 was really good and I’ve learned a lot about myself.

I just felt a little uncomfortable talking about religion. I didn’t say anything but could feel a kind of tension between the people in our group who had different points of views. I don’t like to discuss religion with people who have a slight difference in belief. I just want to believe what I believe and others can believe what they want. I don’t want to judge. I am a Christian and was raised in a Christian home. There are a lot of perceieved ideas people have about Christians. You say you are a Christian and they are like, “Ok, you fit into a different category.” They think you are these negative things. I feel like that applies to all these things we talked about in class. Race is one of the hardest things for me to discuss because I was raised by grandparents who were kind of racist. It
has always been hard for me to not go that direction because I was raised that way. My parents taught me that being racist is not ok, but I spent so much time with my grandparents and it kind of stuck in my head. When we talk about things, I’m like, “Oh. I’m like that.” There are White people who are racist against Blacks and so it’s always hard for me to talk about it because as a White person someone is thinking of me as being racist automatically and that’s hard to overcome because it’s what people think and it’s just hard for me.

“The Danger of a Single Story” made me think about things I have not thought about before. The American society has socialized people to think of all Africans as poor and hopeless without the intervention of a rich, much smarter, White man. Chimamanda Adichie explained that single stories repeatedly show negative aspects of people. Everyone throughout their life, whether they are American or African, go through this type of socialization. It is hard to look outside of one's preconceived notions of other people and cultures when only one description has been given. To become more conscious of others and to break these norms, I think one must go past the stereotypes and learn to discover the true mixture between what is true about these stereotypes and what characteristics are ignorant.

**Conclusion to Chapter Six**

The narratives of preservice teachers presented in this chapter reflect specific elements of their socialization to various sociocultural identities as well as their responses to the course, EDTE 400, including their experiences as literacy partners in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. While patterns across profiles will be discussed in detail in Chapters Seven and Eight, a reading of the narratives presented here suggests that the
course work - considered in light of the students’ prior socialization to various points of view - provided some support as they began to challenge previously-held negative or deficit views of the Ivy Village children’s identities, knowledge, and capabilities. Without follow-up data, it is, of course, impossible to tell what the long-term impact of the course will be, but patterns in these profiles indicate that, at the end of the course, these four students at least began to question prior thinking about dominant stereotypes and assumptions. However, the narratives also suggest that elements of preservice teachers’ ideologies, histories, and perspectives may have acted as barriers which prevented them from becoming more culturally responsive. In other words, it is clear that some stereotypes and limited understandings remained at the end of the course that were likely influenced by the students’ prior experiences. Patterns such as these - found across narratives and through analysis of data from the other preservice teachers in the course – will be shared in Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER SEVEN

UNPACKING PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ PROFILES

The narrative profiles presented in Chapter Six were created as the result of pattern analyses using data collected from four of the preservice teachers in this study. Those narratives were constructed from students’ reflections about their socialization to a range of sociocultural identities – age, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion – as well as their responses to their EDTE 400 experiences. In this chapter, findings are presented based on an analysis of those profiles in conjunction with data from the other students who were primary and secondary participants in the study. Thus, readers will recognize the words of Hannah Ruth, Elizabeth, Cassandra, and Diane from the Chapter Six profiles, but will also be introduced to the voices of Aliya, Mattie, Sandy, Evan, Jean, Ella, Millie, Katie, Emily, and Jason. The first half of this chapter discusses preservice teachers’ socialization patterns. The second half of this chapter focuses on students’ learning through EDTE 400: overturned assumptions, learning about self, and other learning. In these ways, this chapter is written to answer the research question:

What do preservice teachers learn from a one-credit hour undergraduate course (EDTE 400) developed to support them in understanding the need for more equitable literacy practices and more positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities?

The Socialization of Preservice Teachers

The assignment for preservice teachers in EDTE 400 to consider socialization patterns in their identity development and to consider how their identities configure
within systems of oppression and privilege provided a powerful opportunity for them to begin to reflect with a critical eye. Thus, patterns in their identity socialization are presented in great detail here because they represent some of the most important student learnings related to the course (none of the students had explored their own identity development prior to this course) and they provide an important backdrop to other course learning.

This presentation of students’ identity socialization is particularly important because, while students reflected on a wide range of identity factors, careful analysis reveals that the strongest socialization was to racial identities, specifically the normalized identity of Whiteness. With important implications for their work with the African American children at Ivy Village as well as in their careers as teachers, the following sections describe those aspects of their socialization processes focusing primarily on issues of: (a) Whiteness and (b) stereotype and race, but also on (c) Christianity and sexual orientation, and (e) students’ tendency to justify discrimination.

**Learning Whiteness**

The theme that dominates across data is students’ socialization to Whiteness as normalized and superior. Because this dissertation draws on a definition of Whiteness as situated within a system of White dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of Color (McIntyre, 2002), the students’ learning of normalized Whiteness presumes a perpetuation of racist ideology through which everyone, regardless of his or her racial and ethnic identity, is positioned in relation to Whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The preservice teachers described the many ways that they learned about Whiteness as better/smarter/more educated than other racial identifications. These descriptions are
significant because the process of normalizing Whiteness promotes racist dispositions that can keep us from fully learning to take a critical stance or to challenge deficit views of children and families of Color, a foundational goal of EDTE 400. Identifying these elements of the students’ prior experiences also helped me understand socialization as a process that can teach negativity about those outside normalized views. Over and over, students demonstrated ways that they learned to be White or learned that Whiteness was superior. Some felt that this teaching was unintentional on the part of their teachers (family, community members, schools) as when Elizabeth said, “I don’t believe my family intentionally socialized me to think negatively about other people’s race.” But students were generally clear about where the learning came from – whether they believed it was intentional or not - as when Hannah Ruth said, “I was taught by my classmates how I was supposed to act because of my race,” and Cassandra commented, “I have been socialized by my family and other Black people.” It is interesting, however, that while this was clearly not something they had considered prior to the EDTE 400 assignment to track their socialization processes, almost all of the students were able to identify ways that they had learned dominant racial norms.

The data excerpts in Table 7.1 represent subtle comments or observations made by students that reflect lessons in Whiteness. For example, Hannah Ruth, a White student, identified that she was taught that she would not like rap music because “it was for Black people.” Diane described the divisions regarding Black and White students in AP courses in her high school: “We had a fair amount of Whites in the lower levels, but we didn’t have a lot of Blacks in the upper levels.” This reflected her socialization to the notion that White people are more academically successful than African Americans.
Similarly, Jean explained that, “Being Caucasian in the United States has come to mean you are rich, successful, and the paradigm of the American dream,” reflecting her awareness of the process of learning to associate Whiteness with financial wealth. And Millie demonstrated an awareness of how she was taught to view White people and Whiteness as “higher” than other races and ideologies.

Table 7.1: Comments that reveal aspects of learning about what it means to be White

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Ruth</td>
<td>“I was taught by my classmates how I was supposed to act because of my race…My friends told me I could not like rap music because that was for Black people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>“We were also divided between academic levels, like AP and Honors versus Tech prep, which had a lot to do with it. We had a fair amount of Whites in the lower levels, but we didn’t have a lot of Blacks in the upper levels.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>“The media, also played a part into the socialization of being Caucasian descent. Whenever I would watch the news when they would show the suburbs, or an area that looked like my own, there would be just White people on there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>“Being Caucasian in the United States has come to mean you are rich, successful, and the paradigm of the American dream.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millie</td>
<td>“Growing up, I have been taught that White is the race that is higher than others…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process represents the prime force in American society’s way of socializing people to accept a worldview – beliefs, perceptions, values – that support dominant ideology and justify status quo thinking, particularly in terms of the justification of racism, oppression, and inequity (Macedo, 2006). As mentioned earlier, recognition that they had been socialized to Whiteness as a norm that thereby oppressed others is not something the students had thought about before. Evan demonstrated that new awareness when he explained that, “The media, also played a part into the socialization of being Caucasian descent. Whenever I would watch the news when they would show the suburbs, or an area that looked like my own, there would be just White people on there.”
Socialization to actions that perpetuate White hegemony and thereby, racist actions, while not previously visible to most of the White students, was more easily recognizable by the Black students who lived the impact of socialized White supremacy every day. In some cases, these experiences led to synonymous views of Whiteness and racist. For example, Cassandra, a Black female, explained her socialization of Whiteness as seeing anyone who was not Black as racist:

I have been socialized by my family and other Black people to think that everyone who is not Black is racist towards Black people. Based on my experiences and the experiences of others, I believe this is true.

Not surprisingly, unlike the socialization of the White students, as a person of Color, an understanding of Whiteness as racism was an explicit part of Cassandra’s learning, something that she could name as such: to be White is to be racist.

**Hegemony, solidarity, and lessons learned.** One way to socialize or manipulate people into accepting views that exclude those of a race or culture other than one’s own is by forming group solidarity (Brantlinger, 2003). Mattie and Diane reflected such hegemonic teaching in descriptions of their lessons in Whiteness. Mattie explained that the expectation that her White friends held for each other was that they could not befriend a Black person without the loss of White friendships. Diane expressed her reality that being White meant being popular, and further explained that there could not be a person of Color in a popular White group. Mattie’s and Diane’s descriptions of exclusive White group memberships demonstrate socialized racism for the purpose of upholding White hegemony (Bordieu, 1986) which normalizes Whiteness and maintains White dominance. Via group solidarity, whether it was through school, peers, family, church, or media,
lessons about Whiteness were reinforced regularly for Black and White preservice teachers in this study. Those lessons are discussed in the following sections.

**White is good, thus Black is bad.** Learning that White is good or associated with what is good, decent, smart, and correct was often learned through the lens of Black as bad. For example, Elizabeth reflected about how her father, a lawyer, reported “legal cases involving Black men” and thereby played a role in socializing her to see Black men as threatening:

> My father has socialized me to think this way because he is a lawyer in the city and deals with many cases involving Black men who have used violence against innocent people. His job experiences have revealed these evils to him and he has socialized me to be cautious.

Although she did not question the validity of her father’s views, Elizabeth was aware that he socialized her to see Black men as threatening to the extent that she associated the actions of the Black men as “evils.” Associating evils with persons of Color represents a way of simultaneously socializing individuals to view White as not evil, or as good. Johnson (2006) described this type of socialization as another form of privileging Whiteness and perpetuating racism. Phrases like, “many cases involving Black men,” “using violence against innocent people” (who were likely White), and “revealed these evils to me” solidified and justified Elizabeth’s unexamined beliefs about people of Color: White as good, Black as bad.

Another example of how preservice teachers might have associated White with goodness is when Hannah Ruth described her experiences on a Christian mission trip to Nicaragua. She explained, “I met a woman in Nicaragua who assumed that all Americans were crazy cowboys who wanted to shoot people which was one of the most shocking things I have ever heard.” Hannah Ruth expressed her shock at being generalized as both
a crazy and an aggressive American. Though she did not name race, she reflected the notion that Americans (White because that is how she identifies herself, was the race of all members of her mission trip, and is the race of those with whom she associates in the United States as a result of normalizing Whiteness) are not crazy or aggressive, but *good*. Another example of how Hannah Ruth associated American (White) with goodness is when she shared a comment heard on her mission trip: “A lady I met in Nicaragua flat out told me that she was terrified of all the college kids coming down, because her parents taught her that Americans were evil. I thought that was insane.” With the words, “I thought this was insane,” Hannah Ruth revealed that she did not accept that Americans could be evil – inferring goodness. It is important to consider that these descriptions could represent an anti-American sentiment rather than a sentiment targeting the White race; however, Hannah Ruth often referred to people of Color or Foreigners as different from herself as a White, Christian, middle-class American.

*White is correct and educated.* Elizabeth and Millie - White preservice teachers – described socialized views of Whiteness as not only better educated but as having more intelligence than African American or Latino people. Elizabeth communicated her awareness of how she was socialized to believe Whites were superior. She said, “Others are socialized to believe that Whites are superior and that Blacks and Hispanics are less intelligent and determined.” Millie recognized how she was socialized through schooling: “In schools, Whites are assumed to be more intelligent, and often have higher socio-economic status.”

Hannah Ruth, also White, described an experience she had in school in which she was aware of how her teachers corrected her grammar but did not correct African
American students’ grammar. She explained that this experience caused her to “associate good grammar with Caucasian people and bad grammar with all other races.” It is also possible that, because of these experiences, she might have also internalized the view that teachers did not feel that it was worth their time to teach academic English grammar to their African American students, reinforcing a socialization to Whiteness as correct enough to be worth the effort to provide academic support.

Colorblindness means I’m equitable/not racist. It was evident that many of the preservice teachers, whether White or Black, had learned (been socialized to the notion) that a colorblind approach was the least racist approach to describing human beings. They did not seem to see racism in this understanding because they had been socialized to the notion that, to acknowledge color would actually be more racist than to avoid acknowledging it. Table 7.2 reflects this pattern using data excerpts to illuminate it.

Table 7.2: Comments that reveal colorblind approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Ruth</td>
<td>“Growing up, racism was not a large part of my life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>“My race is Black. Ideally, I do not want to be seen as a Black person. I want to be seen as a person.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>“Now, I try to make a point to make myself racially neutral. I try to talk so that if someone heard me but did not see me, they would only know that I was American, not my ‘race.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>“I just think that when you are in a classroom with a bunch of students and realize that it is a diverse group, like White, Asian, and Black, you should just look at everybody as being students, treat everybody equally, and not talk about race.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>“I have been socialized by media and peers and even family to dislike those who do wrong to others, so if a group inflicts hurt or suffering onto others, regardless if they are Black, White, Brown, or even Green, I would find dissatisfaction in their actions and wouldn’t even consider race as a factor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>“I don’t believe my family intentionally socialized me to think negatively about other people’s race.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattie</td>
<td>“My parents judged people based on their character, not their skin color.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An excerpt from Hannah Ruth’s narrative provides an example of using colorblindness as a rationale for not being racist: “Growing up, racism was not a large part of my life because my parents raised me not to view people as different because of their race.” Similarly, Elizabeth and Mattie explained their views that colorblindness meant non-racist views when they talked about judging people based on their actions and character, rather than because of their skin color. For example, Elizabeth said:

I have been socialized by media and peers and even family to dislike those who do wrong to others, so if a group inflicts hurt or suffering onto others, regardless if they are Black, White, Brown, or even Green, I would find dissatisfaction in their actions and wouldn’t even consider race as a factor

Not “even considering race as a factor” eliminated the possibility – in the Elizabeth’s eyes – that dislike of people would in any way be associated with racism. This seems to be an expression of colorblindness as a mechanism comfort – it is more comfortable to adopt a colorblind attitude than to acknowledge racist views. Similarly, Mattie explained, “My parents judged people based on their character, not their skin color.” Another way that colorblindness was revealed was in how Ella equated cultural holiday traditions: “I’m sure African Americans have many holiday traditions that are similar to Whites.” Ella’s assumption that African Americans and Whites share similar holiday traditions in turn dismisses possibility and acknowledgement that races may have distinct cultural, holiday traditions and assumes normalization of her own traditions. These pronouncements of colorblindness are important examples of racism masquerading as anti-racism. If we can convince ourselves that we judge action and character rather than race or if we homogenize people by remarking only on similarities we envision, then we never have to consciously admit to being racist.
Beliefs in the importance of being colorblind were not exclusive to the White students in the study but it is likely they were important to students of Color for different reasons. For example, Cassandra said: “Ideally, I do not want to be seen as a Black person. I want to be seen as a person . . . Now, I try to make a point to make myself racially neutral. I try to talk so that if someone heard me but did not see me, they would only know that I was American, not my ‘race.’” She reinforced this view in her explanation of colorblind teaching as a form of equity teaching:

I just think that when you are in a classroom with a bunch of students and realize that it is a diverse group, like White, Asian, and Black, you should just look at everybody as being students, treat everybody equally, and not talk about race.

Cassandra seemed to process the effects of racism by taking a colorblind approach. She explained a few times throughout her narrative that she wanted to be viewed as a person, rather than identified by her race. As a result of her experiences with racism, she does not seem to feel that race needs to be discussed for other than a need to “unify” different races. These comments are complicated, however, when considering them in conjunction with Cassandra’s thoughts about learning that to “be Black” (using incorrect grammar, to be loud and to be “uneducated”) along with her understanding of how she had been socialized to Whiteness:

I guess it was maybe because I was in upper level classes and was always around Whites. There were only White students in upper level classes. I always felt very uncomfortable around the Black people and felt like they disliked me. The Black females called me White. I mean there is nothing wrong with being called White, but they did it in a bad way which is very hurtful. So I felt like it was hard to go to that group because I felt more comfortable with White people than with Black people.

Cassandra may not want to focus on being a person of Color because of how she described feeling uncomfortable or unaccepted by other Black females or people. Her
explanation reflects that she is considered to be White or act White by other Black people. Situated within these contexts, Cassandra seems to rather situate herself within a colorblind or color-neutral stance; though, at times, she may not even have a choice as others (other Black people) consider her as more White (acting more White) than Black. While it is important to consider that Cassandra was expressing these thoughts to a White instructor (me) and may have articulated her views differently to an African American instructor, family member, or friend, her words complicate the notion of colorblindness and understanding Color as complex and complicated.

These lessons that the preservice teachers learned about colorblindness seem to be an indoctrination across races to a view that being colorblind means being more equitable. Though students of Color may not necessarily associate being colorblind with being more equitable, they too seem to take on colorblind perspectives either by choice or as an alternative to being accepted or rejected by others. However, when considered in relation to data that reveal preservice teachers’ overwhelming normalization of Whiteness and views of Whiteness as correct and educated, the notion of being blind to color only perpetuates the view of Whiteness as a preferred norm. This holds important implications for courses like EDTE 400 in which instructors must acknowledge the pervasive existence of colorblind ideology in order to help students unlearn colorblindness as an approach to equitable teaching.

**Buying into the meritocracy myth.** One aspect of learning to be White was buying into the meritocracy myth. This myth is often described as the American dream - if you work hard, you can get ahead and accomplish your goals. It does not consider the many racial and institutional barriers that a person may encounter in the process of
achieving his or her dreams. Two students, Elizabeth and Danielle, expressed views reflective of this meritocracy myth. Elizabeth said, “My parents have made it very clear that they work hard for everything our family has…I understand the value of a dollar and hard work.” Elizabeth’s comment suggests that the only way to understand “the value of a dollar” is through hard work and that it is only through hard work that her family has attained whatever success they enjoy. Danielle also provided an example of how learning that the only way to get what you want is through working hard when she explained, “Being raised in a middle-class home, I never had the mentality that I could just buy anything and everything I wanted. I was brought up to believe that you have to work hard for everything you want.” Though Danielle was taught to believe that working hard leads to achieving what you want, she became defensive when she proclaimed that she never had the mentality that she can “just buy anything and everything” she wants.

Buying into the meritocracy myth as part of Whiteness involves maintaining an individualized perspective that one can succeed if one works hard, and if one works hard then they will appreciate what they have and respect what they attain. This is important data as it reinforces the need for teacher educators to identify students’ comments that reflect the meritocracy myth in order to help them dismantle the notion commonly formed from it - that children of Color do not achieve because they do not work hard or take advantage of the many opportunities for success. Dismantling the meritocracy myth can also lead students into examinations of cultural, structural, and institutional barriers that keep student of Color from achieving.

*Learning to fear color.* An aspect of learning Whiteness, particularly for the White preservice teachers but also for some African American students, seemed to be
learning to fear color. Data illuminate events in students’ lives as ways that their families or society socialized them to such fears. Though the use of fear is a common way to socialize prejudice and racism, it is often an unconscious habit of Whiteness (Sullivan, 2006). Some preservice teachers described this socialization to fear people of Color throughout their lives.

Evan, a White male, explained in his identity narrative, that though most of the shows he watched on television portrayed mainly Whites, stories about or news reporting crimes portrayed mostly African Americans. Elizabeth described being socialized to see Black men as threatening: “In Five Points, even during the day, I find myself avoiding Black men who are walking the streets. I am ashamed to admit this, but I have been socialized to see them as threatening.” Though Elizabeth’s understandings about Black men seem to be anchored in her father’s depictions of his professional experiences as a criminal defense attorney, she also describes them as supported as well in media portrayals and stories told from friends and families of other races. Elizabeth also demonstrated a fear of people of Color in addition to African Americans, explaining that she did not remember paying attention to races other than her own until she was in fourth grade and the 9/11 tragedy unfolded. Elizabeth described this moment of associating fear with people from culturally diverse backgrounds:

I came home from school that day and the news was on; they were trying to identify the group of people that attacked the world trade centers. Someone in my family said, ‘It probably was the Japanese.’ How could a group of people do something so hateful? I couldn’t help but feel repulsed toward whoever had done this.

In this way, Elizabeth’s family created fear of people of Color by drawing on past prejudices (presuming the anti-Japanese feelings of the World War II era). Elizabeth
used this memory to express her views about a process of socialization through which White families instill fear of other races in children by depicting other races as a threat. Evan also mentions 9/11 as a pivotal moment for instilling fear and racism in his life. He wrote, “Once again the media took part in socializing through religion as well. After 9/11 the media made it seem like such a terrible offense to be a Muslim and that all Americans were Christians.” In these particular selections of data, it is worthy to note that Elizabeth’s and Evan’s descriptions represent fears of any person or entity outside the normalized view of what is “American.” And though they describe descriptions of fear of “Japanese” or “Muslim” persons, student data repeatedly reflected perspectives that all persons outside of their normalized view of White and American, were grouped together as persons of Color.

Finally, Cassandra talked about fear of the neighborhood where Ivy Village was located. Having heard from her sister that “it was kind of the hood and that the residents were ghetto,” and from friends that, “the apartment complex was dangerous and that I should be careful,” she entered the EDTE 400 community experience with some trepidation. She wrote: “I was afraid and nervous.” Although a person of Color herself, this internalized view of people of Color from low income housing projects led to her internalization of fear until (as discussed later), through her firsthand experience, she was able to dispel that misperception and fear.

**Stereotype and Racism**

**Awareness of stereotype.** All preservice teachers of Color expressed incidents in which they either experienced the effects of generalizations, stereotypes, and prejudices or tried to deflect the effects of racism in one way or another. While data suggest that all
of the preservice teachers identified stereotypes, the students of Color, in spite of having internalized lessons about Whiteness as described above, were better able to identify racial stereotypes and racist acts connected to those stereotypes. For example, Aliya who is African American, commented that, “People think Black people are more likely to steal, so we are followed in stores. I have been followed in stores plenty of times, but I ignore the person, or simply ask them is there a reason I am being followed?,” demonstrating her vivid awareness of stereotypes and their direct connection to racism and discrimination against people of Color. Cassandra said that “acting Black involves using incorrect grammar, speaking with an aggressive tone, listening to music being made by Black people, not being good academically, not being interested in formal education and eating soul food.” Ella, who is Black Bermudian, acknowledged that race is always stereotyped. She explained that because she is Black, that she is normally stereotyped to be “loud, ghetto, and uneducated.”

**Awareness of racism.** Awareness of the continued existence of racism was also stronger among the preservice teachers of Color. Perhaps the most powerful was Cassandra’s description of her reality regarding White and Black friends. As a Black woman who has been socialized in many ways to Whiteness, Cassandra explained that, while she has had many White friends, her Black friends were the only ones who stuck around: “I’ve had a lot of White friends, but the really good friends that have stuck by me and stand with me are all Black. So this all makes me wonder why my White friends don’t stick around. Is it because of racism?” Cassandra expressed understandings about how stereotypes are fed by but also perpetuate racism describing how she is discriminated against as a Black woman in society: “As a Black woman, I am
predisposed to make less money than other people, to have a harder time finding a husband than other women, and to be mistreated by the law.” Cassandra added another explicit example of her awareness of racism:

Another memory I have was when I was a teenager and I was applying for a job at Tokyo Grill, a Japanese restaurant. There was a Black man eating in the restaurant, and he said to me, ‘Why are you applying for a job at Tokyo Grill? Shouldn’t you be applying at KFC?’ I laughed it off at the time, but shortly afterwards I realized just how racist the comment was.

Ella (Black and from Bermuda), also expressed her acknowledgement of the continued existence of racism in America when she wrote the following:

Ever since slavery days, Blacks have been looked down upon than other races. A prime example is with the case of Trayvon Martin. Trayvon was a Black boy who happened to look ‘suspicious.’ Another incident was Troy Davis, a Black man who was on Death Row for a crime he did not commit.

And Emily, a preservice teacher who identified herself as Latina, demonstrated awareness of racism when she said, “I was not considered privileged at birth because Hispanics had to work so much harder to be recognized as an equal in the workforce and in education.”

There were a few White preservice teachers who demonstrated awareness of racism in America. Jean described prejudice of African Americans when she explained, “The African American culture has been deemed unambitious and uneducated in society.” She attributed the challenge to change this negative perspective of African Americans to history books, movies, and old mind sets that, “still cloud our judgment when looking at White compared to Black.” Millie also acknowledged racism as a part of history, yet still present in modern society, as she described, “Our country has a devastating history of racial inequality. White men founded this country, and they still
seem to hold the power here. Especially in our Southern society; there is a disconnect between White people and people of other races.” Sandy acknowledged racism as a part of history when she said, “For centuries, Caucasians have been oppressing African Americans.” However, she complicated this perspective, deflecting from the larger racial issue when she drew on feelings of reverse discrimination (explored later), “Although society is much more tolerant of each other now and racism may not be as apparent as it once was, it still exists. Racism goes both ways; however, racism towards African Americans and Mexicans seem to be the biggest issue.” Sandy acknowledged the presence of racism and particularly towards people of Color, yet she was not ready to acknowledge that without tempering it with the comment that racism can go “both ways.”

Feelings of contradiction. Cassandra clearly had feelings of contradiction and confusion as a result of being socialized to Whiteness on one hand but to the racist potential in relationships with White people on the other hand. This kind of complication positioned her both inside and outside of Whiteness and Blackness. She explained:

Now as an adult, I have relationships with White people but they feel like maybe they are not as strong as I perceive them to be. They are more superficial and on the surface. They pretend to be nice. Now I feel stuck with expectations of being a Black person. I’m supposed to be friends with other Black people and be close with them, but I’m not “down” so to speak. I don’t care. I just want some good, decent friends to be around that are good, quality people. I don’t care what color they are.

The complexities of Cassandra’s life are those rarely experienced by her White peers as she writes that, while her relationships with White people do not feel as strong as her relationships with Black people, she is not “down” with other Black people. It is possible that Cassandra does not have a choice in her relationships with Whites or with Blacks. She seems to sense effects of racism in her relationships with Whites while at the
same time she is not accepted as or seen as Black by her Black peers due to the fact that they consider her more White than Black. This notion of Cassandra as White is something that is recognized by other Black people around her and of which she seems well aware:

One day my bus came, and I walked to it, passing a group of Black girls that I did not know. One of them said to me, ‘Have a nice day.’ I replied, ‘Thanks. You too.’ As I walked past, I heard one of them say, ‘She White,’ while another one responded, ‘She is not White,’ in my defense.

**Perpetuating stereotypes by learning to generalize.** With regard to people of Color, the White students in particular seemed to have learned to generalize across racial, ethnic and national groups by using stereotypes. Because they did not have prior experience with taking a critical stance – looking for instances of oppression versus privilege – their experiences in culturally diverse settings tended to result in their perpetuation of generalizations and stereotypes rather than seeking a wider range of perspectives. One example of this was when Hannah Ruth wrote about “blending my culture and Mexican culture together” because she ate a lot of Mexican food:

I like to eat a lot of Mexican food; it’s a part of Mexican culture I appreciate so I make it a part of my life; I feel like I kind of blended my culture and Mexican culture together; I think it’s really important to respect other cultures and appreciate how unique they are.

This surface level view of culture and the tendency to generalize about a cultural or racial group based on limited information was common in many of the narratives. Hannah Ruth provided further examples of this when describing her experiences on a mission trip to Nicaragua and to Hilton Head, South Carolina. Talking about the city of Ocotal, Nicaragua, she described it as “a really poor city” and she described one of the neighborhoods she visited as one of “the most dangerous neighborhoods in the entire
country.” Following that description, Hannah Ruth told a story about her experience, weighted with negative stereotypes and generalizations:

You could even smell the marijuana in the air. It was not a big deal for the kids living there, because they are being raised around it and they will eventually do drug deals themselves. It was a different setting from what I was used to, because I would see kids go into houses while their parents were in there selling drugs to whoever was buying them.

Hannah Ruth generalized her interpretation of how the children of Ocotal felt when she said, “It was not a big deal to them,” and then generalized their future when she said, “They will eventually do drug deals themselves.” Her essentializations reflect an inability to identify positive aspects of Nicaragua and the people she met there. Without a critical lens to challenge the generalizations she was learning to perpetuate stereotypes grounded in deficit thinking.

Hannah Ruth also communicated deficit stereotypes as generalizations through her description of experiences with a mission group in a low-income housing project in Hilton Head, South Carolina. While her only description of families could easily have been descriptions of middle class White family structures, she positioned, stereotyped, and generalized family configurations of low-income Black children in a deficit light: “There was not a single child that I met this summer who had both of their parents living together and some did not even know their parents. Some were living with their grandparents.” Not only was this a deficit representation of families, insinuating that living with one’s grandparents or in a single family home is a negative situation, but generalizations were made that this was the case for every single family. Jason also perpetuated stereotypes through generalizations he made of people from diverse backgrounds when he described his experiences working in a factory one summer:
I worked at a factory one summer, and I was a minority there. All the people were way different than anyone I had ever met, because they were people who were likely to hold these jobs. One guy was from Mexico but had been a DJ in a club in New York. I liked him. He had a really good work ethic.

Jason stereotyped the people who held factory jobs as “people who were likely to hold these jobs” and met one person there that he liked who he characterized as having a good work ethic. Without a critical lens, Jason was unable to view the people he met in the factory through a less deficit lens.

**Stereotype and pity.** Hannah Ruth’s description and generalizations of the Biracial children in Ocotal, Nicaragua, while including the violence of White men, placed blame and/or pity on women of Color who were victims of rape and their children. She described aggressive or degrading actions by American men toward Nicaraguan women saying, “I met a lot of kids who were Biracial because American men had come and raped their moms and all this horrible stuff, but I was always careful not to be judgmental of them.” While we would certainly feel empathy and sadness for women experiencing such horrors, Hannah Ruth’s comment that she was “careful not to be judgmental of them” (using the word *them* to refer to the women) indicates that she seems to feel that it might be easy for her and others to judge the women. This comment, in a way, displaces blame for the rapes by American men onto the Nicaraguan women. While I feel sure that Hannah Ruth meant this comment as one of empathy, at the same time, she unconsciously created a negative perception of the Nicaraguan children and mothers.

**Stereotypes and socioeconomic class.** Many preservice teachers made comments that reflected socialization to negative views of people from low-income households. Diane expressed deficit perspectives of the Ivy Village children when she said, “I think I assumed that the kids who lived there were not going to be smart or be
able to read well.” Jean also expressed a similar deficit perspective of the children when she said, “I was so caught up on focusing that we were working with kids in low income housing that I threw reading for them right out the window.” She later countered her negative assumption when she explained that her child partner helped her understand that, “just because you come from a certain economic status doesn’t mean that you don’t have interest in reading.” Ella also described negative initial assumptions: “At the beginning of service learning when I heard ‘low income apartments’ I immediately thought the worst.” However, Ella gives some indication of beginning to challenge that assumption later explaining that, “Just because you are a certain race, or your parents don’t have enough money doesn’t mean that anyone should think less or look down on you.” And though Sandy did not express negative assumptions of children from low-income backgrounds prior to her experience, she explained how her understanding changed as a result of her experiences with the Ivy Village children. She said, “After the first meeting for Freedom Readers, I had a different understanding of children from the lower social economic class. I was never quite exposed to that back home, and I always assumed the worst of them, based on what I’ve seen on TV or from what I’ve read.”

**Christianity and Sexual Orientation**

Much like socialization to Whiteness, my analysis of data demonstrated that many preservice teachers were also socialized to normalized views of both Christianity and heterosexuality. Both are discussed in this section.

**Socialized to Christianity.** Religious socialization draws from clearly defined ideological systems for what is considered good or bad, and when others’ actions are defined as bad, a level of intolerance is inherent. The narratives and other data from
almost every preservice teacher in this study reflect socialization to Christianity as the dominant, normalized ideological system. Even Katie who identified as Agnostic wrote about the normalization of Christianity from the perspective of feeling ostracized and looked down upon. Thus, on some level, all of the students had been socialized to understand that lives outside of Christianity would be interpreted as bad or wrong.

Socialized rules were also clear within Christian groups. Diane explained an example of this type socialization:

> Being a Christian and growing up in a Christian church my whole life, has definitely taught me certain practices, rules, and behaviors that Christians should follow. For example, cursing, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco were all things that were conditioned in my head to be wrong. It was also almost just as wrong to not pray before every meal, tithe regularly, and refrain from reading your bible on a regular basis.

**Christianity as intolerant and oppressive.** Some of the students talked about their recognition that Christians could be perceived as intolerant of other views. Katie, in particular, identified a view of Christianity as intolerant. Although, at the time of the study, Katie identified herself as Agnostic, she had been brought up to be Christian and voiced her awareness of Christianity as sometimes perceived as intolerant: “I began to realize that many people perceive Christians as being completely intolerant, and this is obviously not something that I wanted people to think about me.” Katie shared her awareness of how she felt that Christians view her as an Agnostic:

> I am Agnostic, which in South Carolina makes me an inherently horrible person with no moral code. This isn’t true. I am a good person. I just don’t know if I believe in religion or any specific higher power.

Though she seemed comfortable identifying herself as Agnostic, Katie was unable to do so without feeling the need to justify her *goodness*. Katie felt that, in South Carolina, many people viewed her as a “horrible person” with no moral code. During a small
group interview, Katie explained that religion was the hardest social identity for her to
discuss with other people:

I think that like religion is the hardest of the social identities for me to discuss
because especially in the South you’re kind of looked down upon if you don’t
have a strong religion or if you have a religion outside of Christianity. So often
times if I do get into a religious discussion with somebody I’m very concerned
about pushing somebody’s buttons or also having them percieve me as a bad
person, and I’m not. I’m a fairly good student, I don’t like shop lift and never
murder anybody or never plan on it. Just because I don’t live my life based on
the Christian commandments doesn’t mean I’m not a good person so that’s a
very hard one because I feel instantly looked down upon. I don’t necessarily
follow any religion.

Another preservice teacher, Millie, identified her Christian identity as one that supported
her as an agent within a system of oppression. She explained:

In America, Christians oppress many people. It is comfortable and okay to claim
to be Christian in America. This apparently gives one the right to call out
someone else’s sins, and justify it with the fact that they are following a religion.

Millie understood that being part of a normative group can make it easier to justify
making judgments about those who believe or live differently. Jason also expressed
understanding that as a Christian, he was taught to oppress others through judging them:

I do still oppress others with my Christian identity by what I learned as a child,
that I should judge others for not following my rules, even if I don’t follow them
myself. However, I am trying to end that part of me, and don’t really see it as part
of the same identity as my Christianity, though I guess it must be.

Though Jason demonstrated awareness of his position as a Christian who oppresses
others, he also demonstrated awareness to work toward changing his actions.

This justification for judging others’ beliefs as a part of socialization to
Christianity is an aspect that Katie talked about when she reacted to Hannah Ruth’s
discussion of her mission trips to Nicaragua and Hilton Head, South Carolina during a
small group interview. Katie said:
What I’m about to say I don’t want to offend you in anyway. The moment when I realized that I didn’t really believe in Christianity, I was actually preparing to go on a mission trip to Nicaragua . . . I kind of realized like how can I go tell these people about God when they have so many other issues oppressing their life like getting food, having their children have clothes, so I kind of felt like I took myself out of the mission trip, and decided I couldn’t tell people about religion when they had so many other things in their lives that were so much more pressing, in America where I didn’t have to go through that. That was my realization with that.

Although Katie described a concern for imposing Christianity in Nicaragua because she felt that it would be an intrusion on their existing belief systems, she seemed to base the argument more on the belief that there were other, more pressing, needs to address. Similarly, Hannah Ruth explained that she enjoyed the service aspect of the mission trip but clearly connected the economic service to the mission of converting the Nicaraguan people to Christianity:

For me I have never been on a mission trip that was soley like go and and tell people about Jesus, like when I have been on them they are also service trips so when I went to Nicaragua, think we had fifteen trunks so probably half the size of this table and they were filled with clothing, and books we had bought for the kids, and we bought food for them while we were there. We ran day camps for the kids that couldn’t afford to go to school. So we were teaching them as we were also learning about them, a lot of it was we would ask them about what’s their city like and what they do in school. We built relationships with them and also shared about our beliefs. I’m always careful to do it in a way that doesn’t say their beliefs are wrong because that is antagonistic.

In this way, Hannah Ruth justified sharing Christian beliefs with the Nicaraguan people by first detailing services they provided for them – clothing, books, food, day camps. She described service as a way to build relationships with the Nicaraguan people, but also as a means to share Christian beliefs. She also said that she was careful “to do it in a way that doesn’t say their beliefs are wrong.” I asked Hannah Ruth what religion the Nicaraguan people practiced and she responded, “Some of them were raised Catholic, like there were a lot of Catholic churches in the city I was in. I was in a city called
Ocotal.” This statement was followed with her description of Ocotal as the most dangerous city in Nicaragua where drug deals were a common occurrence. Though Hannah Ruth and others in her mission group shared their Christian beliefs to the Nicaraguan people, they did it in a way that seemed to dismiss the Catholic religion as something other than Christian.

**Christianity as targeted and oppressed.** Data analysis also revealed that a few preservice teachers saw Christianity as targeted and they provided examples to support their belief in the oppression of Christians. For example, Millie described how she felt positioned as a target historically:

> Worldwide and throughout history, however, Christians are targets. Christianity is a religion born out of and built for adversity. Persecution is guaranteed for those who choose to follow Christ. Because of this, I see myself as one who is oppressed (though not in South Carolina).

Millie presented a similar view – in opposition to the belief that Christians are agents of oppression - by also speaking historically and globally: “Worldwide and throughout history . . . Christians are targets” of oppression. She explained that Christians have always been persecuted for their beliefs; however, she seems to see South Carolina as a safe haven for Christians because that is status quo ideology in that region of America.

Jason described his identity as a Christian as one that has been historically and is continuously under attack but also complicating this notion that Christians are oppressed by describing the complexities resulting from his scientific orientation considered in conjunction with his religious beliefs:

> Perhaps surprisingly, my identity as a Christian has been under attack persistently, and I’ve been more of a target. The Apostle Paul says in the New Testament that Christians look like fools to the rest of the world, and this seems to hold true. I’ve been on the internet a lot since I was a kid, and there Christians are constantly barraged with insults because of who they are. People don’t like us because we
have faith, and in our culture reason and science are seen as superior to faith, and antagonistic to it. As someone who loves science and is Christian, I am predisposed to be oppressed, because the church has made statements about science that haven’t been well thought out, and I am automatically put in with them by having the Christian label.

**Christianity and sexual orientation.** Two preservice teachers attributed Christianity to the intolerance they witnessed with regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered sexual orientations. Mattie explained that her awareness that socialization to the idea of heterosexuality as the normal sexual orientation is often connected to perceptions of biblical teachings:

I am straight. I am seen as ‘normal’ when viewed based on my sexual orientation since I am not homosexual, which to many people seems wrong, as in their eyes, it is not how nature intended relationships to be. If you practice a religion (Christianity), children are typically told it is God’s will that we only become involved in heterosexual relationships, and this is based in biblical stories such as the creation story with Adam and Eve.

Aliya explained similar lessons that taught her that there is a “right” sexual orientation. Though she learned the lesson that the only acceptable relationship was between male and female, she identified learning it from family and media in addition to her Christian upbringing:

My sexual orientation was taught to me as a young child. I remember playing house and I was the “mommmy” and a boy would be the “daddy.” I never suggested two “mommies” or two “daddies.” I also learned what I thought was right about sexual orientation from television and books that were read to me as a child, that included families with kids, and a father and mother. I was never introduced to two parents of the same gender from my parents growing up. My parents are very strong about our Christianity religion, and told me the story of Adam and Eve at a very young age, and it stuck with me, and that’s what I have come to believe is right.

Aliya’s words demonstrate her awareness that there was no space throughout her childhood for envisioning the appropriateness of a sexual orientation outside of heterosexuality. Jean also expressed her awareness of being socialized to the notion that
straight is the normative and the only acceptable sexual orientation. She said, “Because it is the norm to be straight opposed to gay or bisexual, we as a culture have been taught that this is the only acceptable way to live.”

**Tendency to Justify Discrimination: It’s Not My Fault**

The socialization to Whiteness and other discriminatory views reflected over and over again in the student data seem to also reflect perspectives that have become habitual/internalized for many of them. This gives power to the concern that they will enter educational settings with deficit views of children and families of Color, from low-income communities, from non-Christian homes, and from gay or lesbian families. Deficit views such as these are well documented as creating barriers to equitable teaching practices (García & Guerra, 2004; Ladson, Billings, 2009). In many ways, the students had been socialized to justify discrimination even though they had never had reflective opportunities to think critically in this way before. Therefore, they likely did not recognize their thinking as discriminatory prior to this experience. It seems that their attempts to justify discrimination were recognizable as they often defaulted to blaming others and to claims of reverse discrimination. Some of the strategies they used to justify discrimination are discussed below.

**Blaming others.** Through the EDTE 400 assignment for the preservice teachers to track their socialization processes, all of the students were forced to begin thinking about how they had learned their points of view. However, for the White students in particular, there seemed to be a tendency to deflect from owning/taking responsibility for learned perspectives or for not interrupting the generalizations that were made. Sometimes this occurred as students placed responsibility for the pervasive nature of
negative stereotypes on others. For example, Diane, a White preservice teacher, described her experiences attending a high school in which 60% of the students were Black. The following description provides her rationale for why she had not developed more relationships with Black peers:

The high school integrated with another school district and was like a government district so their school was shut down, and they were like an hour from our school. So they had buses 5 o’clock in the morning to get them because their school was shut down and so it got to the point it was 60/40 Black to White and even then it was hard to have a relationship with a Black person because they had their own culture they had their own things and like the White people weren’t allowed.

While this explanation describes tensions between Blacks and Whites, Diane attributed those tensions to the Black students who had their own culture and would not “allow” Whites be part of it. Diane did not address how the African American students might have been excluded or segregated from the White students’ activities/worlds until she reflected on how classes and social groups were segregated in her high school. Diane explained the following:

We really didn’t go to them but they didn’t come to us either so we were like all racist towards each other in a way, no worse but we were divided between academic levels like AP and Honors and Tech Prep people, which that had a lot to do with it but also this popular White group that doesn’t have a Black person in it and this popular Black group and if you walked up to it they would be like what are you doing?

Using reverse discrimination. Reverse discrimination was another way that many of the White preservice teachers justified or contradicted their learned dispositions about people of Color, non-Christians, or gay and lesbian people. For example, Evan attempted to describe his identity as a White male who is an agent of oppression, but almost immediately reversed that stance to present his view that White males are targets of oppression. He wrote the following:
One of the major agents in social identities is being a White male. According to many people the White Anglo Saxon male is the dominating force in America; however, every other social identity has some sort of stereotype when it comes to thinking about the White male.

Evan demonstrated awareness that as a White male, he is positioned as an agent to oppression and as part of a “dominating force” in America. He deflected from this awareness when he mentioned awareness that the White male is stereotyped by people positioned within other social identities. Mattie, a White female, explained that her parents “judged people based on their character, not on their skin color, so bringing home Black friends was never a problem.” As such, she was able to be friends with people of Color when she was younger. However, her story and perspectives changed when she explained that she went to a high school in which 80% of students were African American and discussed the fact that tensions were always high between Blacks and Whites. This is when she resorted to using reverse discrimination to justify not being “permitted” to have Black friends:

Once I got to high school, being friends with a Black person was not permitted by my White friends or, visa versa, by her Black friends. However, it was more than just peer pressure that caused me to realize Blacks and Whites are different. Although I often felt that the Black people in my high school wrongfully assumed I was a ‘snobby rich White girl’ simply because I was White and a part of the mid to upper middle class, I can’t say I really tried to change their mind or prove them wrong. Since I felt like a target to their stereotypes about me, I always laughed with my friends whenever I heard them make racist jokes.

In this excerpt, Mattie identified peer pressure as a reason to discriminate - to distance herself from people of Color - yet she made a point to say that her Black friends did the same thing as if that somehow made the discriminatory act on the part of the White students acceptable. In doing so, she did not reflect on reasons why the Black students might have called her a “snobby rich White girl” and whether her assumptions were
merely unfounded impressions - fed by the discriminatory views of her friends – rather than a reality.

Ella’s use of reverse discrimination was evident when she wrote about her heterosexual orientation as “normal.” She began her discussion identifying how gay and lesbian people are targeted when she wrote, “Being homosexual can cause you to be bullied or even killed in some circumstances.” Then she immediately turned the focus from homosexual discrimination to explain that she felt discriminated against as a female and heterosexual:

I’ve witnessed a homosexual male deny me of a job I was well qualified. He gave the job to a boy who only had a high school degree. Later the manager end up coming on to the boy which forced him to quit. So it goes both ways.

In this way, Ella reflected on being discriminated against by someone she originally noted as a target of oppression. She then used the example of being denied a job thereby positioning herself as a target, loosely connected to her sexual orientation but used to justify her judgment of the gay manager.

**Conclusion: Prior Socialization**

Through their narratives, preservice teachers were able, to some extent, to position themselves within systems of oppression. However, as exemplified over and over in the previous sections, they also strongly justified (through deflection, reverse discrimination and other strategies) racism and discrimination through their intense socialization to normalized and superior views of Whiteness. These racist dispositions identified through preservice teachers’ stereotypes, generalizations, and descriptions of their positionality, kept them firmly rooted in Whiteness. The findings about preservice teachers’ strong socialization to Whiteness/racism reveal that racist dispositions and
discriminatory strategies are present and pervasive, acting as continual means to justify and maintain racism and systems of oppression. These findings mark a new starting point from which to engage students in critical reflections that move them toward making commitments to equity and equity pedagogies.

**What Did The Preservice Teachers Learn from a One-Credit Course?**

Data collected from preservice teachers reflect socialized ideologies particularly about race reflecting carefully taught and learned biases toward Whiteness. While these perspectives constitute barriers that could prevent them from challenging deficit views of children and families and committing to equity pedagogies, data also reflect the presence of a transformative process as, through EDTE 400, they began to deconstruct negative assumptions and replace them with more positive views of children and families. Data provide evidence of at least *the beginnings* of the development of a critical sociocultural consciousness indicating that certain elements of the course were supportive of that process. This second half of this chapter presents data and interpretations of data that support this finding organized according to four categories related to students’ learning: (a) prior assumptions, (b) challenging of prior assumptions/new learning (c) learning about self, and (d) other learning.

**Prior Assumptions**

Prior to spending time with the children in Ivy Village as the community component of EDTE 400, the preservice teachers were asked to express assumptions about the children they would meet as well as about the experiences they would have in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. For the most part, the students expressed negative or deficit views about the children with whom they would interact. An analysis of
student profiles and other preservice teacher data suggest that, prior to their experiences with the Ivy Village children, they expected the following: (a) the children would be Black or Latino/a, (b) the preservice teachers would be uncomfortable, (c) the preservice teachers would be nervous and the experience would be scary, (d) the children would be from single parent homes and have no parental support, (e) the children would not want to be involved, (f) the children would not like them, (g) the children would not like reading and would have poor reading skills, (h) the children would not be intelligent and would not value education, and (i) the children would not be well-behaved and would be disrespectful. Finally, the preservice teachers were overwhelmingly worried about themselves as they faced this experience. Thus the last paragraphs of this section provide data to describe their worries about their own abilities and successes.

**Most of the children will be Black or Latino/a.** When preservice teachers thought about who would live in low-income, government assisted housing, several of them assumed it would be mainly families of Color and a few of them assumed the families would be African American. Some of the assumptions expressed that the children would be either Black or Latino/a included:

- Going into the housing area for the first time, I expected that there would be a large Hispanic population living there, because when I worked in areas like this before most of the kids were Hispanic or Multiracial.

- I assumed that we would partner with predominantly Black children, but I didn’t realize that it would be all African American.

- I expected that most of the children would be Black.

**I will be uncomfortable.** Although some students looked forward to the Ivy Village experience, some faced it with trepidation likely as a result of their socialization experiences. For example, Diane said, “I wasn’t looking forward to the whole
experience,” and explained why she was uncomfortable later in her reflections, “Initially, I was not comfortable going into this service project because I underestimated both my buddy and myself.” Cassandra explained:

My mom told me that it was low income, government housing, and my sister told me that I better watch out when I go over there. She said it was kind of the hood and that the residents were ghetto, and I believed her. She knows more about that because her friends are more, like, different and they kind of know more gangster things, so I trusted her on it. I also heard from other friends that the apartment complex was dangerous and that I should be careful.

Another preservice teacher, Sandy, commented that she had never been “thrown into a community of a different culture.” True to students’ overall socialization to Whiteness, she admitted to being more comfortable with White people than, presumably, people of Color: “I think that if I am with a majority of White students, I will be more comfortable.” However, she also said that she wanted to experience another race or culture: “I think it would be a great experience for me to see what else is out there and to see how other cultures interact with me and other people of other cultures.” This is an interesting pattern particularly for the White students: They seemed fascinated by exotic or tourist versions of interacting with “people from other cultures,” but they were less enthusiastic when those “other cultures” involved African Americans and/or low-income communities. Sandy also expressed an expectation of discomfort, initially describing being “kind of shocked” when she realized that most of the Ivy Village children who signed up for the program were African American. Though Diane did not express discomfort before going to Ivy Village, she described being uncomfortable with her partner in the early stages of the program. She explained:

My first time reading with Kara, my freedom readers’ buddy, was honestly uncomfortable. She is an African American female fourth-grader. Ms. Reid told me that Kara sought me out as her buddy and specifically wanted to be paired
with me above all the other USC students. Knowing that, I felt pressured to live up to whatever expectations Kara had of me.

Finally, Elizabeth voiced age-related concerns worried that she might feel uncomfortable partnering with a child who was in middle school. She wrote:

I was afraid I would get paired with a child who was in middle school. I assumed that it would be more difficult to get along with a child in that age group because I thought that they might be harder to please. I knew I felt more comfortable with younger children, like under the age of 10.

I am nervous and it will be scary. A few preservice teachers expressed feelings of nervousness or made comments reflecting internalized fear to go to Ivy Village or partner with the Ivy Village children. Aliya voiced uncertainty about Ivy Village Apartments when she said, “I didn’t know what I was getting myself into and didn’t know how the apartments would be.” Ella described feeling nervous about how the Ivy Village residents would act: “On the first day I was nervous. I didn’t know what to expect and how the people in the community were going to act.” Elizabeth expressed feelings of nervousness as a result of being White, short, and aware of media’s negative portrayal of how people of Color act toward White people. She explained the following:

I was also nervous from watching TV shows, and I’ve seen the confrontational side and don’t want to be judgmental, but there is a tendency that White people bury how they really feel. And going into it I was like, well what if they respond negatively because I’m White and short? They will probably be bigger than me and not listen to me.

Cassandra internalized fear as a result of hearing negative descriptions of Ivy Village from her sister and friends. She described her feelings in the following quote:

My sister told me that I better watch out when I go over there. She said it was kind of the hood and that the residents were ghetto, and I believed her. She knows more about that because her friends are more, like, different and they kind of know more gangster things, so I trusted her on it. I also heard from other friends that the apartment complex was dangerous and that I should be careful.
The children will be from single parent homes and have no parental support.

Most of the preservice teachers voiced the assumption that the children of Ivy Village would come from single-parent households and that they would have no or very little parental support. The following comments reflect these deficit perspectives:

I assumed since it was a low-income housing development center that the kids…would not have good family lives.

I expected that kids would come from single parent homes.

I thought these children would come from dysfunctional families.

I figured there would be a bunch of young mothers with multiple kids living in Ivy Village and that maybe they’d just want to get their kids off their hands. I figured the kids didn’t know their fathers.

Since I assumed that the residents of the apartments were predominantly African American, I assumed that there would not be any parent involvement.

I had biases about this program by thinking that since we were in a predominantly African American living facility that there would be very little parent interaction and support.

So I was surprised to see that the kids were so well taken care of and my partner said that she spent time with her family and extended family.

The children will not want to be involved in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. Most of the preservice teachers worried that the Ivy Village children would not want to participate in the after-school literacy program. Jean said, “I’m concerned that the students won’t want to be with us reading or doing homework after they’ve been in school, all day.” Millie said that she expected that the Ivy Village children would not want to learn or like to read and that they would be “resistant” to the program. Evan admitted that he thought the children would, “just be there to get through it and not really want to be with us,” and Katie explained, “Going into the experience, I thought that most
of the children were there because it was mandatory.” Elizabeth thought it would be difficult for children of Color to respect her or want to get to know her. She said, “I was afraid that being White the children would not want to get to know me; it will take a lot of effort for me to earn their respect.”

**The children will not like us.** Not only did preservice teachers think that the Ivy Village children would not want to be there, they also thought that the children would not like them. This assumption caused them to lack confidence. Evan said, “I was worried the kids wouldn’t like me and that I would be doing something wrong.” Cassandra expressed her nervousness about meeting the children when she said, “I wondered what they would think of me and if they would like me.” She also expressed insecurity about meeting the children when she wrote, “I believe the children will see me as someone different from most of the other students, and therefore think I am different somehow.” Hannah Ruth assumed that the children would not like her or the other USC students if they think that they have to be there. She explained, “I think the fact that the kids know I am not being paid to be there will make them realize that I actually want to be there and spend time with them.”

**The children will not like reading and will have poor reading skills.** Most of the preservice teachers assumed that the Ivy Village children would be apathetic readers or have poor reading skills. They assumed that they would have to teach reading, correct their reading, or continually motivate the children to want to read. Most preservice teachers assumed that there would be deficits in Ivy Village children’s interests and abilities to read. This assumption was the most prevalent of initial assumptions going into *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. Though I explained that the Ivy Village children
loved reading, the preservice teachers still developed these assumptions prior to meeting the children. Some of the following comments reflect these negative assumptions about the Ivy Village children as readers:

I didn’t think the kids would be able to understand a lot of things or pick up on a lot of things when reading books.

I assumed the worst. I assumed the kids would not want us there, be uninterested in reading, and uninterested in working with us.

I expected that most of them would not know how to read or would be very bad at reading.

I thought it would be difficult to get my partner to read.

I initially thought we were going to help the children read. I expected most of them to have problems.

When I came into this program, I guess I thought that the students’ reading levels would be below average.

Working with them will require a lot of patience.

**The children will not be intelligent and will not value education.** The preservice teachers also expected that the Ivy Village children would not be intelligent or value education. Cassandra expressed her belief that the children “will be poor and not very intelligent.” Hannah Ruth explained her preconception “that the kids would not think that education or reading was important.” She also assumed that younger children would be less interested in learning than the older children. Diane expected that the younger children would be more difficult to work with and expressed, “I didn’t think the kids would understand a lot.” Jean voiced her hope that her partner would want to participate and said, “My hope is that my partner will want to read with me as one-on-one
time because she might not get that chance at home with her family.” She assumed that her partner’s family did not value one-to-one reading time.

**The children will not be well-behaved and will be disrespectful.** Preservice teachers assumed that the Ivy Village children would be poorly behaved and disrespectful. For example, Ella wrote that she expected the children to “misbehave” and Aliya assumed that the Ivy Village children would be “horrible” and “bad.” Evan stated that, since he anticipated working with younger children, he expected that they would be disrespectful. Elizabeth’s assumptions reflected her insecurities about race relations between White USC students and Black Ivy Village children: “Going into it I was like, well what if they respond negatively because I’m White and short? They will probably be bigger than me and not listen to me.” She assumed that because of her skin color and height that the children would respond negatively to her.

**Challenging Prior Assumptions: New Socialization/Learning**

All four preservice teachers described in the Chapter Six narratives identified their preconceived notions of children and their families in largely deficit ways. Those perceptions are reflective of the views of the other preservice teachers in the course. Through their experiences, however, each of the eight preservice teachers who were primary participants demonstrated the ability to at least begin to question and/or contradict or dispel those negative stereotypes. As they spent time with children each week, discussed readings during our on-campus sessions, engaged with me in conversations as we drove back and forth to Ivy Village, and reflected on their own socialization processes, they developed a better understanding of the children’s and their
families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities. In other words, a new socialization began to take place.

An overview of prior assumptions and overturned assumptions is provided in Table 7.3. While I do not know how deeply these new views were internalized or held six months or three years later, they reflect, at the very least, a next step in their socialization process as the evolution of their identities was intentionally influenced by the course to promote more positive views of students and families and to lay the foundation for beginning to take on a critical stance.

Table 7.3 Examples of preservice teachers’ prior assumptions and new learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Assumptions</th>
<th>New Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The children will be Black or Latino/a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children will not like us.</td>
<td>They accepted us and we were able to form bonds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We (the preservice teachers) will be nervous and the experience will be scary.</td>
<td>I was more comfortable than I expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We (the preservice teachers) will be uncomfortable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children will be from single parent homes and have no parental support.</td>
<td>Their families are involved and value education. The children are well taken care of and have families who care about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children will not want to be involved.</td>
<td>The children did want to be there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children will not like reading and will have poor reading skills.</td>
<td>The children like to read and are good readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children not be intelligent and will not value education.</td>
<td>The children are intelligent and want to do well academically. They have varied interests, and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children will not be well-behaved and will be disrespectful.</td>
<td>The children were behaved well and were nice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They accepted us and we were able to form bonds. Several preservice teachers commented in their reflections about being concerned that the Ivy Village children would not be accepting of them. As soon as she met the children, however, Millie realized that
the Ivy Village children seemed eager to begin the program and were happy to see them. She said, “The kids all poured in on time and acted very happy to see us.” Elizabeth expressed similar views when she said, “I believe the kids really liked Freedom Readers Literacy Partners and enjoyed us being there.” She also recognized how accepting the Ivy Village children were and overturned her assumption that they would not accept her because she was White. She expressed, “I have learned that these children accepted me for me regardless of my skin color and I was foolish to be scared.” Evan commented on the bonds that the Ivy Village children and the USC students made throughout the experience when he said, “I feel like we have really bonded over this past semester and I really look forward to Tuesdays up there.”

The children did want to be there. Some of the preservice teachers worried that the children would not be motivated during the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners aspect of EDTE 400 because they would not really want to be there. That assumption was overturned by almost every one of the USC students. For example, Jean rethought her assumption that, because the program was mandatory for the children, they would not want to attend. She said, “I really learned the kids wanted to be there and kept popping in while we were setting up . . . you could see as the weeks went on that the students actually enjoyed being there each Tuesday with us.” And Aliya said, “I was totally wrong about them. They didn’t want us to leave.”

I was more comfortable than I expected. Hannah Ruth expressed that she enjoyed her time with the children when she said, “I also had a lot of fun hanging out with the kids after reading times.” And Millie who did not expect a level of comfort in terms of having comfortable conversations with the children said:
I kind of got to know three kids pretty well and pretty much just by talking to them. One of the best days was when we stayed late and went to the park and played tag for five-10 minutes. The kids just wanted to run around and talk and that was cool. They let conversations flow and relate to us even though they are half our age. I just wasn’t expecting that.

Millie assumed that the children would not relate to the preservice teachers but was able to find comfort in their openness and willingness to engage in conversations. Aliya also noted greater comfort than she expected. She reported talking with her partner and described their relationships as a “friendly” one. Evan also realized that he “really did enjoy working with the younger kids,” when he originally thought he would not enjoy partnering with younger children. And Elizabeth described being so comfortable at Ivy Village that she often “looked forward” to the sessions.

**The children behaved well and were nice.** Ella overturned her negative assumptions about the children’s behavior as she explained, “I thought that the children were going to be misbehaved and come from dysfunctional families, but these children turned out to be great.” Aliya voiced awareness that she was wrong about her initial views when she said: “I was totally wrong about them. They didn’t want us to leave, were well-behaved, and listened and most got attached very easily.” Cassandra also countered her initial assumptions that children would not be very nice when she said, “This service learning experience made me realize that some children can be very nice.”

While condescending in many ways and reflecting what has been termed White Talk (McIntyre, 1997) or talk that privileges the feelings of Whites and represents socially acceptable ways of using language to talk about race, these overturned assumptions do not represent moves forward in the thinking of these students. They also represent White
Talk as Miller (2013) described it, “scripts of racism that are often transmitted via cultural discourse” (p. 16).

The children are well taken care of and have families who care about them. Several preservice teachers overturned assumptions about Ivy Village children and families as they learned that the children were well taken care of and that their families cared about them. Hannah Ruth explained:

I thought the kids from Ivy Village would come from broken homes, because when I worked at my other job this past summer, I rarely met a kid who lived with both parents. I learned that Sasha and her brothers and sister live together and are close. I learned that other kids in Ivy Village actually lived with both of their biological parents. I was surprised to see that the kids there were so well taken care of, and I learned that Sasha spent a lot of time with her extended family. I learned that Sasha loves her family more than anything else.

While Hannah Ruth has not yet begun to question the assumption that children must have two parents to be well cared for, this experience at least taught her not to assume that children of Color living in a housing project would come only from single parent homes.

Aliya, who initially assumed that the young mothers of the Ivy Village children just wanted “to get their kids off their hands” and that the Ivy Village children did not know their fathers, overturned those assumptions when she explained learning that the child she worked with “does know her father and loves her mother and sisters.” She also said that, “The mothers cared so much for their children, some even walked their child over to the clubhouse to be sure they were in attendance.” Similarly, Jean recognized that family was an important part of her literacy partner’s life when she said, “She often talked about her grandmother and times when her family would go out for special occasions like when her father took her and all of her siblings to the zoo.”
Families are involved and value education. Representative of most of the preservice teachers, Evan who initially thought there would be no parent involvement shared that his assumption “was disproven from day one when they all came in and sat with us.” He further explained the involvement of the mothers describing how “every week a mom would come in and watch us.” Emily’s reflections revealed her learning about the fact that families were interested in and supported their children’s education. She talked about how her literacy partner’s mother supported her reading when she said, “Her mother took her to the library a few times a month to check out a new book.” Hanna Ruth also developed positive views of her literacy partner’s family and their valuing of education recognizing the child’s mother as a source of support and motivation for her:

I learned that Sasha’s mom told her that she either had to go to college or join the military after she graduates from high school. I think this has really motivated her to do well in school because she told me many times that she wanted to go to college.

The children are intelligent and want to do well academically. Again reflecting their socialization to seeing Whiteness and middle class as normalized and superior, many of the students expressed expectations that the children of Ivy Village would not be intelligent or that they would not want to do well academically. For example, prior to the Ivy Village experience, Millie said that one major assumption she had prior to her experience in EDTE 400 was that “these children would not be capable” of doing as much as she thought they should. This was prefaced with the comment, “I remember I was telling some of my friends about my partner and they were like, ‘Is she Black?’” Though she does not say she assumed Asia would be capable of less because she is Black, Asia’s race may have been considered as a factor. However, like her EDTE 400 peers, as Millie got to know her literacy partner, she recognized that she was
“extremely intellent . . . Asia seems to be way ahead of other fourth graders. She talks about classes at school like they don’t challenge her at all.” Evan also recognized the children’s interest in academic achievement saying, “All the boys made sure they told me what their grades were and they were all good!” And Jean, again rather condescendingly but reflecting her own moment of growth, said that her literacy partner showed her that there are “bright, talented people willing to learn in all walks of life.” Similarly, Diane described how she overturned her negative assumptions about the Ivy Village children when she shared her experience “successfully” working with her partner:

One moment I really enjoyed was when I successfully explained to her something. I don’t remember what I was explaining to her, but I remember thinking that she wouldn’t understand me. However, she was able to comprehend what I was trying to teach her without me putting the concept in ‘dumber’ terms.

Sandy reflected on her experiences in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners and explained her realization about her partner’s intelligence was perhaps one of the most honest and non-condescending statements of all when she said: “Working with my literacy partner and discovering her incredible intelligence taught me that educators need to be less concerned about what we think we know about a student, and more concerned about their actual ability level.” Diane also described her initial deficit perspectives of the Ivy Village children and further explained how what she learned changed her perspective:

I feel kind of silly that I initially thought these things, because the kids at Ivy Village are really smart and easily picked up on things. This memory really changed the way I viewed Kara and others her age. It was all just a really cool experience and I’m glad the kids proved me wrong.

Over and over, the preservice teachers offered comments that revealed the beginnings of new socialization regarding the intelligence of children of Color from low
income communities. They learned that Ivy Village children had goals and dreams that motivated them to do well in school. Hannah Ruth learned that her partner, Sasha “wants to be a singer or a cosmetologist” and said that Sasha “really wants to learn about everything she possibly can.” Elizabeth explained that her partner wanted to be the first in her family to go to college and graduate and that “she wants a successful career.” Aliya said that her partner wanted to be a singer and “plans to attend USC.” And Evan said that the three boys he worked with throughout sessions wanted to play sports but “plan to go to college as well . . . I was also surprised that the boys would come up and tell me their grades and that most of them were A’s and B’s.”

**The children like to read and are good readers.** Table 7.4 represents comments that preservice teachers made about Ivy Village children in which they acknowledged that the children liked to read and were good at it. These and other data represent overturned assumptions as they contradicted their previous expectations that the children would not like to read or would have poor reading abilities. For instance, Hannah Ruth described what she learned about her partner’s reading interests and abilities and ability to “make decisions about what book we would read or what we would do during a literacy activity without even being asked.” Hannah Ruth continued:

> I was really impressed when we were talking about different books. She was able to tell me every book she had read by R.L. Stine and what each one of them was about. I actually like many of the books Sasha picked out for us to read and was always impressed with how much of the plot she remembered. I was also impressed by her reading skills. I remember that I hated reading out loud when I was her age, but she reads very well and very dramatically. I was also surprised at how many times she would stop while reading and talk about a part in the book that reminded her of her life and experiences. Sasha was so inquisitive and was always asking questions.
Elizabeth had a similar epiphany as she began identifying positive aspects of her literacy partner’s knowledge and capabilities:

Sam immediately found interest in a book, *The Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen. She disproved my stereotype of middle school kids right away. Before I started working with her I assumed that middle school girls were snobby and awkward, but Sam was mature for her age. Regardless of age I was so pleased when she found interest in *The Hatchet*, because I didn’t know she would be such an avid reader.

Cassandra also expressed recognition that the children liked to read and were good readers. She said:

My child was more introverted, but she liked to read.

I also enjoyed reading with one of the boys and watching him read enthusiastically. We even did different accents while we read the book which was fun.

A couple of the kids I worked with enjoyed reading.

Another time I worked with a different boy who was 12 years old. He was very outgoing, friendly, silly, and a good, animated reader.

I have learned that when children take control of their reading by choosing their own reading material or acting out what they are reading, then they enjoy reading more.

Not only did the students encounter children who were readers, they worked with and came to recognize the capabilities of children reading well beyond their grade level. Millie expressed surprise at her literacy partner’s reading expertise and commented, “I worked with a seven year-old who read better than an 11 year-old. It was amazing, she was only seven and reading through books.” Overturning similarly inaccurate assumptions, Jean said, “My partner wanted to read from the get go and when she was done she wanted a new book” and Aliya said, “My literacy partner was great! She loves English language arts and loves reading and was excited when she made connections
during reading.” Diane was also able to identify her literacy partner’s exceptional abilities as a reader explaining:

Kara and I had a lot of conversations, not about school, and that was really cool. I wasn’t looking forward to the whole experience, but Kara was a really cool fourth grader who can read at such an amazing level. I only had to correct her on a few things and it was cool to see that. She adapted to things quickly, like if I read in an animated voice she would read in an animated voice.

Finally, going into the experience, Diane said that she “assumed that the kids who lived there were not going to be smart or be able to read . . . I thought I was going to have to talk everything down.” By the end of the semester, however, she wrote in ways that addressed not only the child’s abilities but her own lack of insight to have thought otherwise:

These assumptions were totally wrong because Kara really surprised me in her reading and comprehension abilities. She is a really smart girl. I feel kind of silly that I initially thought these things, because the kids at Ivy Village are really smart and easily picked up on things. This memory really changed the way I viewed Kara and others her age. It was all just a really cool experience and I’m glad the kids proved me wrong.

Table 7.4. Preservice teachers’ comments about Ivy Village children’s reading abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservice Teacher</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Ruth</td>
<td>I was really impressed when we were talking about different books. She was able to tell me every book she had read by R.L. Stine and what each one of them was about. I actually like many of the books Sasha picked out for us to read and was always impressed with how much of the plot she remembered. I was also impressed by her reading skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>I was also surprised at how many times she would stop while reading and talk about a part in the book that reminded her of her life and experiences. Sasha was so inquisitive and was always asking questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>Regardless of age I was so pleased when she found interest in <em>The Hatchet</em>, because I didn’t know she would be such an avid reader. This showed me that she wanted to be active in participating in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child was more introverted, but she liked to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also enjoyed reading with one of the boys and watching him read enthusiastically. We even did different accents while we read the book which was fun.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A couple of the kids I worked with enjoyed reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learned that when children take control of their reading by choosing their own reading material or acting out what they are reading, then they enjoy reading more.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliya</td>
<td>My literacy partner was great! She loves English language arts and loves reading and was excited when she made connections during reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millie</td>
<td>I worked with a seven year-old who worked read better than an 11 year-old. It was amazing, she was only seven and reading through books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>My partner wanted to read from the get go and when she was done she wanted a new book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Kara and I had a lot of conversations, not about school, and that was really cool. I wasn’t looking forward to the whole experience, but Kara was a really cool fourth grader who can read at such an amazing level. I only had to correct her on a few things and it was cool to see that. She adapted to things quickly, like if I read in a animated voice she would read in an animated voice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The children have varied interests, and abilities.** Preservice teachers were also able to gain more positive understandings about the children at Ivy Village by identifying their interests and abilities. Hannah Ruth acknowledged Sasha’s strengths as the oldest sibling in her family with regard to being independent. Hannah Ruth also highlighted Sasha’s interests, personality characteristics, and what they both shared in common:

She loves to dance. She loves reading. She has a great personality and seems very confident about herself. We discovered that we both really liked math classes and reading.

Elizabeth identified her partner’s interests and abilities and she articulated the interests of other children she met during the Ivy Village sessions:

Since Sam was the oldest child there, the other kids looked up to her.
[Sam] had a strong personality and always kept her younger brother, who was also participating in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, in check.

I also learned that Solomon, who is actually Sam’s younger brother, is on the basketball team at his school because he had to leave early to go to a basketball game.

I noticed that five year-old Maeva had a great time searching for eggs which showed me that she has an active and adventurous side.

Sienna, Sasha’s younger sister, mentioned that she ate Easter dinner at her grandmother’s house with her whole family which leads me to believe that she values her family time.

Each of the kids were laughing and smiling the whole time during Freedom Readers Literacy Partners sessions.

Discussed in the conclusion to this chapter, it seems clear that these new understandings about the existence of children’s interests and abilities were a result of opportunities to observe and interact with the Ivy Village children supported by our discussions and readings in EDTE 400. As Elizabeth expressed, “Little experiences like these that occurred through interactions during Freedom Readers Literacy Partners sessions showed me children’s values and interests.”

**Learning About Self**

Not only were the preservice teachers able to overturn assumptions about children and families as they learned through EDTE 400 experiences, they were also able to learn more about themselves: not to fear, that they could establish relationships with children from backgrounds different from their own, that they could relate to children from different age groups, even finding their own joy as readers and confidence as teachers. While their expressions of learning about self sometimes tend to be tinged with a lingering missionary stance and some deficit language – “these children,” “I want to
teach in the inner city” – they do represent some learning about their capabilities as teachers with children from backgrounds different from their own.

For example, Elizabeth appeared to become very comfortable with the Ivy Village children throughout the semester and to recognize that such a level of comfort was possible for her as she worked with African American children from a low socioeconomic community. Although she continued to write from a “these children” stance which has definite deficit overtones, her reflections show this important realization about herself:

That final day at Ivy Village showed me just how far I had come to know these children. I was foolish to be scared of them. I have been pushed to think beyond how I have been socialized. I have learned that patience and trust play huge factors in building educational relationships among students.

Elizabeth was able to overcome some of her insecurities or fear of working with African American children and realized that she was able to initiate relationships with children by spending time getting to know them. Evan learned that he was capable of relating to students in middle school and high school. He said, “I still wish to teach high school level but I now know that if needed to take a job with fourth and fifth grade students I can do it and still be enthused and enjoy my job.” He also explained that though he was nervous when he first started the program, that he was very comfortable as a result of his experiences at Ivy Village. He expressed, “I feel very comfortable in my own skin when it comes to being an educator.”

Jean explained that, before the program, she was not sure what age level she wanted to teach, but after the program, she felt motivated to teach at the elementary level. She also learned that she has an interest in teaching African American children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Whether her words were the reflection of a missionary
stance or the beginning of a critical perspective through which she wanted to address inequitable power structures in schools, she had moved beyond initial concerns about feeling comfortable or adequate in a low-income setting with children of Color. She said, “After being with a group of African American children, I am really considering teaching in an inner city school.” Similarly, Millie wrote:

This experience has shown me something that I want to do as an educator. I would like to run programs like this in the community. I want to be the type of teacher that spans ages and curriculum to build community and friendships that might seem strange to the outside.

More specifically, Emily articulated that the experience had helped her find her own joy as a reader by working with her literacy partner. She explained, “I was fortunate to be paired with Amanda. She has impacted me more than she will know. She has helped me find pleasure in reading.” And Mattie realized that it was possible for her to support a child as a reader. She commented, “Makayla began to want to read on her own. I think this was the most memorable moment for me, because I really just wanted to support her in believing in herself and her reading abilities. I was able to do that.”

Importantly, the students learned that they had the ability to relate to children and to work with them. They gained confidence as Evan wrote: “I also learned I am capable of relating to children. I was a little nervous when we first started the program about being able to be comfortable around all of the kids but by the end of the service learning I feel very comfortable in my own skin when it comes to being an educator.”

Other Learning

Through the EDTE 400 experience the preservice teachers learned in ways that allowed them to overturn or at least question a wide range of prior assumptions that reflected deficit views of children and families; they also learned about themselves as
both teachers and learners; and they learned a range of other lessons that are briefly
delineated here.

**Listen.** First, many of the students mentioned learning the power of listening; of
talking with children yes, but also listening to learn about them. As Hannah Ruth wrote:

I know I need to not have the assumption that kids don’t want to learn. Kids do
want to learn and it’s important to kids that you actually listen to them and show
them that you care. I would often ask Sasha about her week. I would usually ask
her about specific things she had previously told me that she was excited about
doing. In this way, I think I expressed to her that I did care about her enough to
remember her life outside of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*

**Build trust.** Several of the students mentioned learning the importance of building
trusting relationships with children. Elizabeth said, “I learned that trust plays a factor in
how a child learns, because they need to feel open and comfortable enough to make
mistakes and ask questions” and Diane explained, “I have learned that patience and trust
play huge factors in building educational relationships with children."

**Give children ownership of the learning process.** Another key learning for the
preservice teachers was the importance of giving children voice and choice in the
learning process. Cassandra described what she learned about herself and about how to
better support the children’s learning:

I kind of let the students take charge and if they needed help or needed to be
corrected, then I stepped in. I think it gave the students more confidence if they
were not being told what to do all of the time, and it increased their leadership
skills when they felt they had control over themselves.

Cassandra learned that she does not always have to correct students and that they need
the freedom to learn on their own. She was able to explain the importance of giving
students choice and voice in the process of learning to read; she was able to acknowledge
that the children enjoyed reading and she was able to identify what might have led to their joy of reading:

I have learned that when children take control of their reading by choosing their own reading material or acting out what they are reading, then they enjoy reading more. I do not think reading should be forced, because otherwise, it will probably not be fun. Children should have options about what they want to read, and those options should not just include fiction books.

**Learn alongside.** Finally, some of the preservice teachers learned that it was important for them to be learners too. Cassandra wrote:

Teachers should feel comfortable doing whatever they ask their students to do. This will give the student a sense that the teacher and his/her assignments are fair. For instance, when we read and had to draw pictures of what we read in chalk on the basketball court, I also drew with my students. I did not correct or aid their drawing. I drew my own drawings related to the book so that we worked as a team and everyone had freedom of creativity.

While she will eventually learn how to balance working alongside in creative endeavors with direct teaching that moves students forward, Cassandra and others had learned the importance of working with and alongside children in order to help them feel more comfortable and confident. She recognized a critical role of *teacher as learner* with her students.

**Conclusion to Chapter Seven**

Cassandra wrote in her service learning blog that the EDTE 400 experience “opened my eyes to what I’m like as a person.” By this she meant that that she did not realize how she was socialized to have certain perspectives and she did not realize the depth of oppression and pervasiveness of racism towards people of Color, even as a person of Color. Realizing the impact of socialization on preservice teachers’ perspectives was a pattern across all of their descriptions of how they learned to think in new ways. While their narratives reflect a process of normalizing Whiteness, those
narratives also reflect the lack of opportunity or support to develop a critical stance which would allow them to interrupt and challenge deficit views of children and families of Color and from low-income communities. These negative and deficit views seem to have become habitual/internalized for many of the preservice teachers. In spite of these strongly socialized ideologies which act as barriers to recognizing the importance of committing to more equitable pedagogies in schools, data also reflect the beginning of what could become a transformative process - deconstructing negative assumptions and replacing them with positive views and knowledge about the existence of systems of power and privilege that can be interrupted through education.

While there were certainly significant epiphanies in the experiences of the preservice teachers in this study, there was also a lingering tendency for them to focus reflections on what the experience did for them. For example, Millie said, “Working with kids and exploring ways of learning feels more like fun to me than work. This is how I view most avenues of service. Something about helping those who may need it make me feel good.” This reflects the deeply embedded dispositions revealed in some of the narrative profiles with regard to prior missionary or service work: “We have been on a few mission trips through our church, and those trips have really influenced my thinking and made me feel good about myself.” While it is surely important for students to feel good about themselves through this process, I recognize that there is a delicate balance that all educators need to find to avoid the perpetuation of the do-gooder stance with which many of the students enter such programs. This is discussed in more detail in the implications chapter, Chapter Nine.
In terms of student learning, however, the bottom line seems to be that the preservice teachers in this study exhibited evidence of some growth and at least the beginnings of developing a critical sociocultural consciousness. EDTE 400 provided an entrée into a new kind of socialization and the potential for what is possible in the context of a one-credit-hour course structured to support preservice teachers’ ability to consider children and families from a strengths-based perspective, introduced to current inequities and the power structures that perpetuate them.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MY ROLE AS TEACHER EDUCATOR

Tracking the development of my socialization and growing critical sociocultural consciousness in Chapters Four and Five, the socialization of the preservice teachers in Chapter Six, and patterns in the students’ lives and EDTE 400 experiences in Chapter Seven provide the backdrop against which my role as teacher educator in EDTE 400 can be examined. In this chapter, I present findings that are a result of that examination - gained through an analysis student narratives, my narrative, and the full range of data collected in this study - in answer to the research questions:

What can I learn about my role as the course instructor in fostering undergraduates’ learning?

What specific elements of the course were supportive of teacher candidates’ learning?

What elements impeded learning or were not supportive?

The chapter is divided into three overarching findings about my role as teacher educator. Because the development of a critical stance – or at least an introduction to it – was the focus of teaching in EDTE 400 (the “learning” I hoped would result from it), those findings are framed as elements in that process: (a) recognizing dispositions and experiences supportive of developing a critical stance, (b) specific elements of the course that supported the development of a critical stance and (c) elements of the course that impeded the development of a critical stance.
Recognizing Dispositions and Experiences Supportive of Developing a Critical Stance

Learning to take a critical stance means developing the insights and abilities to recognize and challenge deficit views of children and families, to expect and seek knowledge and capability in the homes and communities of children too often marginalized in schools, and to recognize and challenge structures that perpetuate inequity, power, and privilege (Johnson, 2006; Kincheloe, 2011; Long, Volk, Tisdale & Baines, 2013; Moje & Lewis, 2007). Data from this study lead me to believe that an important part of the teacher educators’ role in supporting such learning is to be able to recognize when students’ dispositions and experiences are supportive of developing a critical stance and then to know what course experiences can build on the foundation students bring to the classroom. Two insights in particular are discussed below as dispositions or experiences often claimed by students and teacher educators as rationale for why we think we can see inequities, but data show that this is not always the case: (a) resistance to socialization to particular identities, and (b) experiences with persons of Color. This section ends with a look at readings and experiences in my own learning that were essential components of helping me recognize the non-critical in my previous views and that helped me to develop a critical eye.

Resistance to Socialization

Reflecting on my narrative and the narratives of the students, it seems that there are instances in which I and they considered or attempted to resist socialization to particular identities. Those instances of resistance matter because they represent openness to different ways of thinking and possibly an opening to the development of a critical
stance. However, I came to see that resistance to some identities such as traditional

gender roles or age stereotypes was not enough to lead to the critical stance necessary to
understand the role that power structures play when considering racial identity. For

example, as a child I tested the boundaries of gender socialization by having different

interests than those that were expected of women in my family. I sought freedom to step
outside gender expectations, especially as I played outdoors or with males. I also resisted
age roles by choosing to marry outside of a traditional marriage with regard to age, a
choice which has positioned me to face challenges as a result. To some extent, I resisted
socialization to the Catholic church by attending and becoming deeply involved in an

African American, Christian church.

In spite of these examples of identity resistance, however, in many ways I have
not yet developed the ability to resist my socialization to Whiteness. Thus, my data seem
to indicate that while I did, in some ways, resist socialization to some identities,
resistance to the overwhelming power of White socialization was and is the most difficult
to develop indicating its powerful and pervasive nature. It was not until I was able to
reflect on my life’s experiences as I was introduced to critical perspectives fostered by a
doctoral course (EDTE 800) and when I analyzed my narrative profile for this
dissertation that I began to question my own socialization to Whiteness at all. While
resistance to some aspects of roles regarding gender, age, and religion led to broadened
thinking and perhaps a greater acceptance of and sensitivity with regard to those issues,
without further support and resources, much was left unexplored - unsurresisted.

Considering my attempts to resist socialization, I recognize that the deeper
issues continue to be embedded in my identity. However, I believe that identifying
instances of resistance, however surface level they might be, as well as recognizing instances of failure to resist, provide starting points for helping teacher educators understand where to begin in introducing a critical stance. And, recognition of the struggle involved in attempting to stronghold identities (such as racism) helps me better understand the stronghold of Whiteness as a normative power and to recognize the challenges that I and others face as we work to change that norm through teacher education.

**Experiences With People of Color is Not Enough**

This study helped me realize that experiences with people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds do not automatically lead to dispositions that are supportive of developing a critical stance (in me or in my students). It is not surprising that being in the company of persons of Color alone would not lead to deeper sensitivity about issues of equity but this is something that is reflected in my narrative and in the narratives of the preservice teachers. I see it in my father’s experiences when he arrived to America and entered diverse public schooling in downtown Canton, Ohio and developed racist views against African Americans. I recognized this in my first husband as we drove around Columbia, South Carolina, looking for apartments; his racist comments helped me realize that someone could develop very racist beliefs even when spending most of his life around people of Color.

I also recognized that experiences with people of Color were not enough as I read White preservice teachers’ identity narratives when they explained that they had always been in the company of African American peers but then justified racism by describing how they were discriminated against as Whites. I saw it in Hannah Ruth’s
descriptions of her missionary work with people from backgrounds different from her own in Nicaragua and in Hilton Head as she still held onto White superiority and Great White Hope mentality. I noticed how preservice teachers, both White and of Color, demonstrated a lack of understanding of power structures as well as internalized racism and discrimination regarding children from low income settings. Similarly, my experiences during college with diverse groups of friends and volunteering in agencies that supported diverse groups of people did not necessarily make me more likely to understand inequities in society or in schools. It is interesting, however, that through those experiences, I did exhibit a kind of empathy and perhaps even pity, characteristics also exhibited by the preservice teachers as they described their missionary experiences, and that pose barriers to being able to take a critical stance. I acknowledge that pity can be a barrier to taking a critical stance. It is a sentiment of White Talk (McIntrye, 1997), that often positions a person in need of being helped or saved. Even when I started teaching high school, I did not understand what it meant to take a critical stance; I was not aware of the larger power structures or that I actually perpetuated them by lowering expectations for students of Color so they would receive higher grades. I began changing the way I dressed and spoke, and while something about my interactions with students seemed to invite their respect, merely being in their company was not enough to teach me about systems of oppression and how to challenge them. Consequently, I perpetuated a form of racist teaching because I did not insist on or teach for success. So while I had experiences with students of Color every single day, it was not enough to give me the understandings I needed to teach in equitable ways. It took writing and reflecting on my autoethnographic profile for me to see the situation as such. The following statements
reflect discriminatory practices that I believe I perpetuated through a non-critical stance; even though I thought I was supportive:

- I was more lenient in my grading Black students than White students
- I held the African American students to lower expectations
- I made sure they passed the class whether or not they had academic skills they needed to attend and succeed in college.

Identifying these practices as non-critical approaches (mine and the preservice teachers’) has been an important step in moving toward an understanding that a critical stance cannot be developed by merely putting oneself in the company of people from backgrounds different from one’s own. While I believe that the bonds and relationships I formed with African American students when I was teaching high school led me to be more open about venturing into the community to attend an African American church, and helped me to become a part of Freedom Readers and Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, it was only a beginning and does not seem to have been enough to help me fully understand or develop dispositions necessary to take a critical stance.

**Readings that Supported Self-Reflection**

My analysis of data indicate that it was not until I was immersed in critical theory readings and then engaged in deep reflection about my own socialization processes and about the socialization of my students that I came to understand the powerful hold that White socialization has in all of our lives, how easily we can deflect from recognizing that hold, and why a critical stance is important if we are to challenge it. Through specific readings and films (Table 5.2) that I encountered in graduate courses and through self-initiated reading, in conjunction with the opportunity to dialogue with other aspiring critical thinkers as I developed and re-developed my autoethnographic narrative, I came
to understand more about not only my socialization processes but that of my students. During my doctoral comprehensive exam, two of my professors suggested reading Thompson’s (2003) article about White investments in antiracist work and Derman-Sparks’ & Ramsey’s (2011) book about anti-bias multicultural education to support my understanding of the need for and teaching in anti-racist ways. The dissertation experience pushed me to think more deeply about my identity which led me to seek texts such as Brodkin’s (2002) that looks at how Jews became White in America and what that says about race and racial relations, and Guglielmo’s and Salerno’s (2003) text that describes the construction of race in America and considers whether or not Italian Americans are White. These texts are *a beginning* in helping me understand the process of White socialization for many immigrants coming to America in ways that illuminated key elements and challenges in my own family’s experiences. As I constructed and analyzed my narrative, my doctoral advisor and peers conducting similar work provided opportunities for supported reflection as I learned to think more critically about my own social identities, socialization, and experiences and to consider embedded issues within them and my efforts in teacher education.

Table 8.1. Doctoral readings that supported self-reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


These aspects of the doctoral program of which I have been a part for the last five years have shaped my perspectives and ways of thinking about teaching and teacher education. It is important to emphasize, however, that while theories and understandings I gained from courses formed my theoretical framework and helped me gain the insights in the growth of my critical sociocultural consciousness, it was the process of conducting this dissertation research and engaging in supported reflection surrounding my study (conversations, feedback on drafts of writing, personal reflection, formal data analysis) that was the necessary next step in helping me better understand my identity as positioned in Whiteness and my role as a teacher educator.

**Specific Elements of the Course and the Development of a Critical Stance**

In addition to recognizing the dispositions and experiences supportive (or not supportive) of developing a critical stance, specific elements of EDTE 400 contributed to that process. While I do not believe that the students or I left the course with a fully developed critical stance, data seem to indicate that we each grew in our ability to challenge prior beliefs. In other words, we began to develop dispositions identified by the
literature as necessary for successful multicultural education - dispositions necessary if we are to ultimately acknowledge the pervasive nature of racism and other discriminatory acts; recognize and eliminate deficit views of children and families; and teach in culturally responsive ways (Gay, 2010; Long, Anderson, Clark, & McCraw, 2008; Souto-Manning, 2009). This section describes specific elements in my role as teacher educator that were effective to some degree in supporting student learning: (a) modeling language and behaviors, (b) guiding students to construct identity narratives and counter narratives, (c) selecting films and course readings, (d) providing questions and prompts, (e) facilitating course discussions, and (f) planning for and supporting on-site engagement at Ivy Village.

**Modeling Language and Behaviors**

Modeling language and behaviors that focused on strength-based perspectives of children and families was an important part of my teaching process. For example, when I wrote the description of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* on the students’ list of options for the community/service component of EDTE 400, I thought it was important to begin then modeling language and behaviors reflective of non-deficit stance so I reworded the site description from the wording used the previous year. The previous year, Ivy Village was described with the words, “low-income housing project.” During the year of this study, I altered the wording to read:

**Freedom Readers Afterschool Literacy Program, Ivy Village Apartments**

Non-profit literacy program. Volunteers (15 max) will be paired with students ages 5-13 to work on individualized reading and literacy skills in their neighborhood community center.

As a result of my pilot study, I thought it was important to de-emphasize the descriptor “low-income housing” because I had become aware of how undergraduate students might
immediately generalize that children from low-income housing would have many deficits and possibly refrain from choosing the site in which to serve or they would immediately assign negative stereotypes to the setting. Instead, I decided to model the use of nondominant discourse – avoiding the typical descriptor, “low-income” in favor of “neighborhood community center.”

I continued to model strength-based language and behaviors during class instruction when we discussed social identities, our roles within the system of oppression, and broadened perspectives of differences in people and their ways of thinking or living. For example, I tried to be thoughtful about how I countered students’ negative or deficit descriptions of children or adults. I felt that, to impact their learning, it was important for me to interrupt those deficit comments and tried to do so by posing questions to foster their thinking about other perspectives rather than to let them pass, unquestioned. When students said that the children came from “bad” or “dysfunctional” families, I asked questions such as, “What are some positive or good things that are happening at home with family members?” I also countered students’ negative or deficit descriptions of children and families with perspectives that shed light on positive aspects of individuals’ identities, actions, or interactions with others.

One example, recorded in my researcher’s journal, was when university students, Ryana and Maggie were having a difficult time reading with a young girl, Maeva. Ryana complained, "She won't do anything! She won’t do anything we ask her to do!” and Maggie confirmed, “Yeah, she's having a hard time sitting still and paying attention.” I had learned from the community manager, Ms. Bea that this was Maeva’s first year in formal schooling and shared this with Ryana and Maggie. I also made a point of talking
with Maeva as she worked with Maggie and Ryana, demonstrating how the preservice teachers might ask about her family, her new baby sister, and her interests. I asked about the books she was reading with Maggie and Ryana, expecting her to be able to talk about them. I also suggested that they sit somewhere less distracting and that, as they read aloud to Maeva, to stop periodically to ask questions about her life and share their lives as they connected to the book. The following is a reflection from Maggie’s blog that shows the impact of my demonstrations on her changing disposition about Maeva:

As we were talking to Ms. Lisa today, she asked Maeva about the books we have read so far this semester. I was a little apprehensive about this because I didn’t know how Maeva would respond or if she remembered anything we have read. However, to my surprise, Maeva was able to remember everything we have read so far; she even remembered the word grandmother in Spanish, in a Dora the Explorer book we read two weeks earlier. I was also surprised that Maeva was willing to respond to Ms. Lisa so confidently because I often have trouble getting her to respond when I ask her a question. It could have been how Ms. Lisa always talks with her about her life and seems so interested in her and what she has to say. I also think Maeva feels smart when Ms. Lisa asks her questions and believes she can respond.

This example reflects how my modeling of behaviors for the purpose of encouraging students to recognize and eliminate their use of deficit language about children and families and some impact on Maggie’s thinking. I demonstrated the importance of getting to know Maeva by asking about her family and events and experiences in her life. My interactions with Maeva also made it clear to the university students that I believed in the child’s ability to respond to reading, and I modeled holding high expectations for her when I asked her to share what she remembered about the books she read.

Another example of how I countered negative or deficit descriptions through modeling was one day when I tried to shed light on positive aspects of Maeva’s identity. Maggie, some other students, and I were driving back to the university from Ivy Village
and Maggie mentioned that Maeva was uncooperative. I recalled the conversation in my journal:

When I was driving back to campus with three USC students who regularly rode home with me, Maggie who normally partnered with Maeva, mentioned how uncooperative she was. She said, “I don’t know what Maeva’s deal was today, but she was bad the entire time.” I asked her what Maeva did and she replied, “She just wasn’t paying attention and wouldn’t do anything! She was throwing food at her sister at one point!” I shared what I heard from Maeva’s mom. Maggie then said that she did not even know that Maeva had a newborn sister. We talked about how changes in the home, like a newborn sibling, can cause children to seek attention by acting out. I was trying to help Maggie and the others expand their perspectives on understanding “bad” behavior by learning more personal information about their family. We also talked about how common this is for children, and one of the students riding in the car said that she acted similarly when she was young and her younger sister was born.

In this conversation, I attempted to counter Maggie’s negative interpretation of Maeva’s “bad” behavior by sharing what I had learned about Maeva’s new sibling. I helped Maggie realize that Maeva’s behavior was typical of a child who is getting used to transitions of a new sibling at home. One of the other students in the car confirmed that she too acted like Maeva when her younger sister was born which added to the attempt to counter a negative perspective of Maeva. This was yet another example of how I modeled the importance of learning about a child and their family in ways that countered deficit views of them.

I also believe that I influenced students’ perspectives of children, families, and community members at Ivy Village through my interactions or conversations with adult participants within the setting (mothers and Mrs. Bea). The first day, I greeted the children, Ms. Bea, and her manager with smiles and hugs, genuinely excited and grateful to see them and at the same time setting the tone for my students’ interactions with them. Evidence of this became more obvious in the coming weeks as I noticed that some of the
students began smiling more when they saw their partners at the beginning of sessions, often giving them hugs or shaking hands. The undergraduate students also started to engage in conversations, sometimes initiating them, with Ms. Bea throughout sessions and they appeared comfortable with her.

**Guiding Students to Construct Identity Narratives and Counter Narratives.**

A primary assignment in EDTE 400 was for the students to write identity narratives (Appendix D). They were asked to think about ways in which they had been socialized to various identities and then reflect on ways that their identities positioned them within systems of oppression and privilege. From the teacher educator’s perspective, I appreciated this assignment because it pushed students to try out a critical stance by being asked to reflect on the history of their own positionality. This then informed my ability to plan for and support further learning. Students’ narratives reflected their initial abilities to question their positioning related to systems of privilege and oppression. The following selections provide an example of Millie’s ability to critically reflect on positionality within her narrative:

Finally, I somewhat uneasily identify myself as ‘White’. I have some trouble with that, because I feel that my birth parents might be of some strange descent, but I will never know. Growing up, I have been taught that White is a race that is higher than others, and I vehemently disagree. In fact, I would not align myself with this identity if I could get away with it. Unfortunately, I am awfully pale. This identity (as a White person) predisposes me to an unequal place in our system of oppression. Our country has a devastating history of racial inequality. White men founded this country, and they still seem to hold the power here. Especially in our Southern society, there is a disconnect between White people and people of other races. In schools, Whites are assumed to be more intelligent, and often have a higher socio-economic status. I personally don’t see any reason for this except for the fact that it has always been this way in this country. Simply because of the color of my skin, I am an oppressor. I may even receive opportunities that I take for granted in place of a person of a different color. However, I hate that I am an oppressor in this system.
My most important identity, as well puts me in an unequal position. My identity as a Christian makes me both an oppressor and a target. In America, Christians oppress many people. It is comfortable and okay to claim to be a Christian in America. This apparently gives one the right to call out someone else’s sins, and justify it with the fact that they are following a religion. I, then, am part of an oppressive group in this country. Worldwide and throughout history, however, Christians are targets. Christianity is a religion born out of and built for adversity. Persecution is guaranteed for those who choose to follow Christ. Because of this, I see myself as one who is oppressed (though, not in South Carolina). Like my identity as White, I see myself as an oppressor just because of the group I am in (though, how many oppressors are actually aware of the fact that they are oppressing others?)

In this way, Millie was able to reflect on her positionality as both a target and an agent of oppression. This assignment gave her the opportunity to begin to explore – recognize the existence of - the complexity of her identities and present both sides of their positioning.

Similarly, Elizabeth explained:

My opinion on socialization now is so different compared to when I came into the course. When we read and talked about social identities and socialization, I began to think about how I have been socialized and how it has impacted my life today and shaped the person that I have become. When I take a look in the mirror I now know why I feel the way I do about certain aspects of our world. I see how my upbringing has shaped my outlook on life. It was really difficult for me to talk about stereotypes based on different races just because there were people from other races in our classroom. I’m not ashamed at all though; that was how I was raised, so I’m not going to hate myself. In turn, I am more conscious of how my peers and future students’ backgrounds and socialization have shaped their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and dispositions on various aspects in the world.

These narratives also provided a foundation for student reflection at the end of the semester as they constructed and presented narratives to contradict dominant deficit views of children and families through their Service Learning Shares. Examples of ways that students were able to overturn their initial assumptions through the requirement to construct counter narratives in this final assignment are provided in Table 5.3. I feel that much of the success of this opportunity to construct counter narratives was the explicit requirement to examine and challenge assumptions. Examples of ways that I restructured
the prompts for this assignment (from the prompts used in the pilot study) are provided in
the following section, “Providing focused prompts and questions.”

Table 8.2 Sampling of undergraduates’ initial assumptions and counter narratives from
their Service Learning Shares (presentations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aliya’s Initial Assumptions: I began to make assumptions and think these kids were going to be horrible and bad. I just saw mothers and they were very young. Some had multiple kids and thought maybe they just want to get their kids off their hands for a while. I saw no fathers, and I thought these kids didn’t know their fathers.</th>
<th>Aliya’s Counter Narrative: I developed a great friendship with Shaneka! She loves English, language arts and reading. She is always excited to read and can make interesting connections. I found out she does know her father. She loves her family. She helps her mother babysitting younger sisters. I can tell she is going to be a well-rounded woman when she gets older.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean’s Preconceived Notions: I thought we were going to work with African American children from a low-income community who would behave badly, have poor reading skills, and grow up to sell drugs or go to jail.</td>
<td>Jean’s Counter Narrative: I worked with a girl who was a great reader. I didn’t have to correct her at all. She was very sweet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan’s Preconceived Notions: I thought the kids we were going to work with would not have any respect for us and would just be there because they had to. When I realized they were all African American, I assumed there would be no family involvement. I also figured the kids would have bad grades or not care about their grades.</td>
<td>Evan’s Counter Narrative: I realized that there was parent involvement right from the start. The moms were there the first day to sit and talk with us. Each week a mom was there watching us. I also was surprised when my partner and his friends came running up to us at the beginning of a session to show us their report cards. They all had A’s and B’s and were so happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella’s Preconceived Notions: Initially I was thinking that I would have to be creative in getting my partner to read. I know I didn’t like reading as a child. I also thought that coming from low socioeconomic status, that my child partner would not be interested in reading. I didn’t think there was any family involvement in education.</td>
<td>Ella’s Counter Narrative: My partner really impressed me with her reading. She reads every night at home and her mother takes her to the library. Her family is really supportive of her education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie’s Initial Assumptions: When I came into this program, I guess I thought that students’ reading levels would below</td>
<td>Katie’s Counter Narrative: My partner is extremely intelligent and reads very well. She absolutely loves reading. She seems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
average. way ahead of other fourth graders. I also noticed that she has a really strong sense of self.

Selecting Films and Course Readings

In Chapter Three, I described how I chose assigned readings for EDTE 400 from a large body of resources that I had encountered in my doctoral studies that were transformational to my thinking. For the course, I ultimately carefully selected a few articles (Table 5.4) and one film that could be digested in a one-credit course for the purpose of introducing preservice teachers to issues I wanted them think about as they interacted with the Ivy Village children and reflected on their personal socialization processes.

Table 8.3. Required articles and film viewed for EDTE 400

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The film of the TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story” (Adichie, 2002) was one of the most powerful texts experienced by the students during the course. Over and over I felt the influence of the decision to share Adichie’s speech about the dangers of labeling and one-dimensionalizing human beings. For example, Jason wrote:

Chimamanda Adichie talks about how peoples' understanding of each other can be fundamentally wrong if they only know one story. She reveals the importance
of not assuming things about people from different cultures, and instead suggests knowing their real story first.

Because of this film, Diane also recognized that single stories “repeatedly show negative aspects of people” and reflected on her growing recognition that American society and how it socializes Americans to see only one, dominant perspective:

The American society has socialized people to think of all Africans as poor and hopeless without the intervention of a rich, much smarter, White man. She explains how this is called a single-story opinion: showing people as only one thing repeatedly. Everyone throughout their life, whether they are American or African go through this type of socialization. I think her term "single-story" is very valid in today's society. It is hard to look outside of one's preconceived notions of other people and cultures when only one description has been given. To become more conscious of others and to break these norms, one must go past the stereotypes and learn to discover the true mixture between what is true about these stereotypes and what characteristics we are ignorant to.

And Sandy was able to extend her understanding of the importance of working together, as a society, to stop telling only single stories and judging others by single dimensions and/or stereotypes which tend to be negative and deficit-based. She focused on using Adichie's work as a foundation for taking action to change one-dimensional views of others:

Too often, we are too quick to judge a person based on stereotypes or "single stories" that we have of groups of people. We create single stories of people before truly getting to know them and before being able to see another perspective of their identities. I admire her capability of identifying herself as not only a target, but also an agent in regards to forming single stories. She admits that she is guilty of creating a single story of Mexicans based on what she saw in American media. This is something that I think we all need to work on as a society. Whether we know it or not, we are all guilty of forming these single stories. We may not be doing it maliciously, like the way she created a single story of Americans as a child, but I think that at a certain point in our lives we must understand what we are doing and make a change for the better.

In terms of readings, Harro’s (2002) article outlining the socialization processes and how we are influenced by institutional structures as well as personal experiences was
particularly supportive as students were required to reflect on their own socialization and were prompted to think about their role in systems of oppression. The article by Mccarthey and Moje (2002), highlighting how identities and literacies are constructed and practiced within relationships of race, gender, class, and space, helped students better understand the significance of identity and the role it plays in their relationships with others, especially with regard to teaching. The study presented in the article by López-Robertson, Long, and Turner-Nash (2010) showcased preservice teachers’ processes of spending time in homes and communities and overturning their prior deficit-laden notions of children and families, broadening their perspectives with knowledge about the capabilities, caring, and support within children’s families and communities. This article had important impact because the students in EDTE 400 were able to as a model for their own interactions with children and families at Ivy Village – it created a tangible vision for the experience I hoped they would have - as well as for their presentation of counter narratives (Table 5.3) in their Service Learning Shares at the end of the semester (Appendix F).

**Providing Focused Questions and Prompts**

The way that I posed questions and prompts in this study as compared to the pilot study also seemed to have an impact on the students’ responses. For example, the service learning blogs (Appendix E) required the students to reflect on their experiences at Ivy Village and I provided prompts that I hoped would push students to challenge deficit views. In previous semesters, I merely asked them to present their service learning experiences with their classmates. Consequently, students had no basis for moving beyond their initial assumptions and negative stereotypes about children and families and
they often described children as unknowing, unmotivated, bad, or lacking in many ways. In an attempt to elicit more positive views, during the semester of this study, I added the following question to the guidelines for writing the blog:

Write one reflection reflecting on your observations recorded within your second field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What are you learning about students’ identities, interests, strengths, and motivations?

This question, as simple as it appears, led to much more positive descriptions of children than I received in previous semesters. Before I created this question as a written aspect of their requirements, it did not matter how many times I verbally asked students to provide positive descriptions about what they learned about children or adults within their service sites, they did not provide them.

I also urged students to focus on strength-based views of their experience with children at Ivy Village by requiring them to write about “highlights/memorable moments” rather than merely their “experiences.” In previous semesters, the resulting reflections focused on descriptions that ended with statements such as, “I now know that I do not want to work with these types of children,” or “I do not want to work in these types of schools.” Many students said that they were going back “up north” to teach or would look for jobs in private school settings. During the semester of this dissertation study however, as a result of many course elements, one of which was the requirement to focus on highlights of the experience, students responded more positively to that prompt. While still demonstrating the use of some essentializing language, rather than writing about a diminished interest in working with children outside their own backgrounds, they expressed desires to work in diverse settings. For example, Sandy said, “After being with
a group of children who was the majority Black, I am really considering teaching in an inner city school.” She further explained this in her blog when she wrote:

Looking back, I can’t believe how far we have come. I was very hesitant going into the first day because I did not think I would be accepted by the kids. I was so glad to see how quickly they opened up to all of us and how enthusiastic they were about the program. The last day was actually quite sad for me, but I was glad to have made relationships with the kids.

Millie also responded positively, explaining that she desired to support partnerships similar to those she had experienced within Freedom Readers Literacy Partners:

This experience has shown me that this is something I want to do as an educator. I would like to see a program like this in every district. I imagine I could pair a high school student with an elementary or lower middle school student to be a buddy like we were in Freedom Readers.

I also found that it was necessary for me to use specific questions and prompts to push students’ thinking with regard to their presentations at the end of the semester, the Service Learning Shares by posing the assignment in a new way. In previous semesters, I did not require students to present counter narratives as part of their presentations; instead I merely encouraged them to draw on what they had learned about children and their families and to present that learning. As a result, students consistently shared deficit views of children and their families. During this semester, however, I decided to add questions that would prompt a more positive view of the experience and the children, questions such as:

- How did you get to know the children and/or people? Or how did you develop relationships within your site to get to know the individuals with whom you interacted?

- What did you learn about their identities (their joys, interests, goals/dreams, sources of pride, knowledge, family, language, or literacies)?

- What did you learn to reverse deficit perspectives of children?
These questions were designed to guide students to focus on the dispositions I hoped they would develop. As a result, while some deficit views persisted, I heard fewer deficit descriptions of children and families than I had heard during the previous three semesters combined. In their presentations, instead of saying, “The kids did not seem motivated to learn,” students said things like “As I got to know my partner and the other Ivy Village children, I realized that most of them really did love to read and learn” and “They were all really excited to be there. My partner was even asking to bring extra books home to read.” It was evident that students were better able share what they learned about children and adults positively than students in previous semesters, an important element in the road to being able to take a critical stance.

**Using Student Writing to Support Course Discussions**

After students wrote their identity narratives (Appendix D), I pulled out specific examples from their writing to discuss in class (keeping the authors of the identity narratives anonymous). These examples represented the students’ most critical reflections about identities and positonality within systems of oppression. Using these selections from various students’ narratives provided an immediate entry into discussions of forms of oppression in society and in education contexts because they came from stories to which many of the students could relate. Through these discussions, students often identified what they believed were forms of discrimination or inequities in the schools or sites they served. We further discussed normative ways of thinking and living that could oppress others who think or live outside of the norm. While I did not collect data to be able to provide examples of these conversations, my memory of this instructional strategy was that it was helpful in soliciting focused student discussion.
Many times throughout the semester, I drew on the students’ writing and responses in a variety of ways. For example, I raved about the reflections and stories students shared when they were critical and reflective of aspects of culturally responsive teaching or a critical stance. They seemed to be aware of my responses, and more students began to share similar stories drawing on positive insights and additive perspectives of children. Whereas most students provided deficit-laden descriptions of the children or adults at the beginning of the semester, toward the middle of the semester they began to move to comments that reflected children’s capabilities, strengths, interests, support, motivation, possibilities, hopes, and successes. Intertwined with the strategy of modeling described earlier, I feel that capitalizing on students’ own positive words as a model was a powerful strategy.

**On-site Engagements at Ivy Village**

I believe that planning and sustaining the on-site engagement at Ivy Village was the most important aspect of my role as a teacher educator and, when supported by the other elements of the course and the experience, contributed significantly to students’ introduction to taking a critical stance. As described in Chapter Five, most of the preservice service teachers believed that their experiences as literacy partners with the children of Ivy Village helped them to challenge prior deficit perspectives and overturn initial assumptions and stereotypes of children. Testimony from students about the importance of the off-campus experience were strong as reflected in Elizabeth’s words:

The experiences I had participating in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* helped me think about the issues we discussed in class. Experience is different than reading about it. I don’t think I would have gotten as much out of the course if I hadn’t participated in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* because it’s more intimate with a small group of kids. I enjoyed my time working with Ms. Lisa and all of the children at Ivy Village. I would love to volunteer again with *Freedom*
Readers Literacy Partners. The kids were great! My experiences in EDTE 400/Freedom Readers opened my eyes to see the bigger picture and I feel more well-rounded because of it.

This kind of outcome was my intention as I planned the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ sessions; my hope was that I could support the preservice teachers, through their experiences at Ivy Village, to develop dispositions that would allow them to move beyond their own worlds and recognize and eliminate deficit views of children and families as the foundation for cultivating a critical stance. Diane’s words reflect her experience in terms of those outcomes:

One of the highlights for me of the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners experience was getting to step outside of my comfort zone. Initially, I was not comfortable going into this service project because I underestimated both my buddy and myself. I didn’t think that I would be able to reach Kara to the point that we could ‘hang out’ every week. I assumed that Kara would not be smart because of her age.

Analysis of data point toward five elements in my role as teacher educator that supported this kind of preservice teacher growth through the Ivy Village experience. I: (a) provided a carefully crafted site description, (b) facilitated a site orientation that focused on positive views of children and families, (c) planned specific literacy engagements, and (d) developed relationships and made their importance visible to the USC students.

Site description. I was thoughtful throughout my experiences in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners, starting initially with the description included on the EDTE 400 community site list mentioned earlier (Appendix L). As mentioned earlier, I was careful not to use primary descriptions of the community as low-income or government housing. From prior experience, I knew that if I described Ivy Village as low-income, students would refrain from choosing it as a site because of their negative assumptions of
children from low-income backgrounds. I felt it was important to have students sign up for the site and then begin to prepare them to think about their assumptions and counter them as they learned about the positive aspects of the Ivy Village children’s identities. I also felt that, my tone and focus from students’ very first introduction to community sites would set the tone for our perceptions of the children and their community.

**Site orientation.** I chose to briefly prepare the students to serve as literacy partners through an orientation meeting on the university campus. As with the written site description, during the orientation meeting, I knew I would play an important role by modeling language and dispositions that I hoped participants would adopt and internalize throughout their experiences. The following statements represent some of my oral communications to students during the orientation meeting. I used language that I hoped would help them gain confidence in their ability to be literacy partners and to communicate the positive focus of the experience:

I believe you are all fully capable of working with the children at Ivy Village Apartments.

Your success as a literacy partner depends on how well you get to know your child partner.

I urge you to learn about the Ivy Village children and families and about yourself through *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’* experience.

Another element in the site orientation was an intentional discussion of what a literacy partner meant. I explained that being a literacy partner was learning from as well as teaching a child partner, reading together, working together, and getting to know one another. I had not used the same language and descriptions with students the previous year, and as a result, those students wrote about their uncertainty of their role and held expectations of being a “tutor” or “teacher” to the children rather than a “partner”
learning with the children. In comparing blog entries of the preservice teachers in the pilot study with the students in the dissertation study, I noticed the participants in this study seemed to feel more confident about their role as literacy partners as a result of this orientation which focused more explicitly on the partnership element of the work they would do at Ivy Village. Unlike the participants in the pilot study, participants of the dissertation study did not question their role as literacy partners in their initial blog entries. In contrast, they made comments such as: “I am eager to meet the children and create bonds with them”; “I would like the children I will be working with to feel comfortable with me. If they feel I am approachable and interesting they will most likely be more interested in the activities and tasks”; and “I expect to learn a lot about the child I am placed with through reading and the activities. I expect to learn a lot about myself.” They seemed to better understand that this was a partnership. I believe this was because I clearly emphasized that they would not be teaching reading or be expected to be reading experts, but that they were expected to read with their partners and have conversations that centered on their readings.

Planning specific literacy activities. An important part of the impact of the Ivy Village experience on preservice teachers’ learning was the requirement to engage with children in the context of specific literacy activities. These activities were designed to bring USC student and child together around purposeful events. For most of the partnerships, these activities seemed to be successful in meeting that goal, particularly for preservice teachers who had not spent time in settings outside their own cultural comfort zones.
**Introductory activity.** Our first activity - BINGO (Appendix I) – was developed as a way to help the children and the USC students get to know each other. The children showed their excitement throughout this activity and I described in my journal that, “everyone seemed engaged.” As a result a few children even requested specific USC students for their partners.

**Reading activities.** Reading activities were particularly supportive of the USC students’ learning. At four o’clock during each session, I called Ivy Village children and USC students into the community center, so I could review the agenda with them and they could grab snack and a book and begin their shared reading sessions. These reading sessions appeared to be productive as the Ivy Village children were paired with USC students reading and talking about the books. They were free to read anywhere they felt most comfortable for the day (Figure 8.1)

Figure 8.1. Literacy partners reading during shared reading time
During this time, the preservice teachers were assigned specific activities in which to engage with their partners: visually representing literary elements of their books, making text-to-self connections, rewriting portions of plot, creating their own stories, or creating poetry reflective of their book’s theme. As I watched those interactions, I realized that these purposeful activities became important foundations and catalysts for the partners to interact and develop comfort with each other. During one of the sessions, for example, the agenda (Appendix K) required literacy partners to create love-themed haikus. The children and USC students were highly engaged during this activity. This is reflected in the following observation from my researcher’s journal:

This activity was high energy and the children were extremely engaged. It was interesting to observe the children and USC students interact during this creative composing process. The USC partners seemed entertained and surprised that the children were so into the activity. When the groups presented the haikus, everyone followed instructions and wrote excellent haikus. The presentations of them were highly creative and entertaining. There were bursts of laughter and clapping after each presentation. Everyone seemed to enjoy one of the group’s haiku presentations even more than the others.

Another observation recorded in my journal reflects the high level of engagement with another activity-based interaction – creating body sketches on the basketball court (Figure 8.2):

Everyone was interacting during the session activity: smiling, laughing, talking, and drawing. Even some of the USC females, who often appeared withdrawn, were laughing, drawing, and interacting more with the Ivy Village children. A few partners chose to do body sketches, and the children were giggling as they traced the USC students. I particularly noticed today how much the Ivy Village children love to present their work. They each seem much more comfortable presenting in front of the whole group than they were during the first couple sessions of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners.

After observing the literacy partners engaged in this activity, I realized how much the Ivy Village children enjoyed working with USC students and how proud they were to
present their work. The children were very eager to present and kept running up to me to ask to present first. We all gathered around each chalk artwork while literacy partners, mainly the Ivy Village children, presented the meaning of each work and how it represented the book they had read.

Figure 8.2. Literacy partners engaged in creating body sketches on the basketball court

**Building relationships.** Many patterns constructed from analyses of data reflect the importance of my role in forming relationships or partnerships in the development and implementation of EDTE 400. The relationships I formed with Tracy, the founder of the original *Freedom Readers*, the Ivy Village children, and Ms. Bea, the Ivy Village residence manager, were essential to my learning and to my ability to develop and sustain this project. Those relationships provided me the ease, comfort, and support to initiate the program with undergraduate students. The relationships also allowed me to provide a relationship-building model for the university students.

The discussion that follows lends insight into the significance of forming relationships with (a) Tracy Bailey, (b) the Ivy Village children, and (c) Ms. Bea, and the insights I gained from them as teacher educator. Ultimately however, I have come to understand that it is not just the modeling of relationships that is important if we are to
impact preservice teacher learning but it is also making those relationships visible by pointing them out and talking about them with preservice teachers in intentional and explicit ways.

My relationship with Tracy. The time I spent with Tracy driving to and from our doctoral classes (described in Chapter Three), provided opportunity for us to talk and share multiple stories. She shared the processes of setting up Freedom Readers and trusted me enough to support me in developing a similar site. I learned a great deal about Tracy with regard to her identity, family, and life experiences which led me to better understand educational and societal inequities experienced by persons of Color. I was able to learn about her vision for education and literacy and her motivation to make things happen. I learned that forming a partnership involves spending time to have genuine conversations, share stories, and get to know one another. This gave me confidence as well as insights and information. I do not think I would have ever led a community site like Freedom Readers Literacy Partners had she not shared her processes with me and told me that I could do it. In this way, she also modeled how I might take initial steps to form a partnership with Ms. Bea; she acted as a catalyst for accessing Ivy Village and setting up Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. My relationship with Tracy as a friend and mentor is an essential part of my own process of developing a more expanded critical sociocultural consciousness needed to support preservice teachers’ learning and development of similar dispositions.

In return, I try to support Tracy in any way I can. I continue to volunteer in her program, Freedom Readers in Horry County, where I read and work with a nine-year-old girl named, Stella. Tracy and I continue to meet and talk on a regular basis and support
each other in our life endeavors. This type of reciprocal relationship is necessary in sustaining the energy, knowledge, and purpose for enacting equity pedagogies. Not only is this relationship supportive of my learning, but as I describe it to the undergraduate students, they receive a demonstration of the importance of supportive relationships in conducting critical and equity-based pedagogical work.

*Relationships between preservice teachers and children.* An important part of my role as teacher educator was supporting the USC students’ relationships with the children. I was very attentive to how the USC students interacted with the children. I continually worked to encourage students or help them negotiate any challenges that they encountered with children. During our first session, I noticed that the USC students seemed excited and more comfortable than students in previous courses. I wondered if it was because of the immediate enthusiasm and warmth displayed by the children or perhaps I was more comfortable this second time around which led to their feelings of comfort. I wrote:

I imagined that the Ivy Village children knew what they were going to experience because most of them had participated the previous year. Since the children were more relaxed and excited, the USC students seemed more relaxed and intrigued than last year’s group. I may have been more relaxed this year and that may have been communicated to them.

The children were primary motivators in the relationship-building process so it became my role to tap into that process while making it visible to the USC students. The children took the initiative to invite USC students to play with them and to talk with them. The following observations recorded in my journal show how the Ivy Village children made first steps:
One of the Ivy Village boys (La’ Roy) asked one of the USC literacy partners (Mark) at the Ivy Village meeting on January 31st to come early on February 7th and play basketball.

The Ivy Village girls, not the USC students, initiated talking to the female USC students.

The boys invited some of the USC males to play basketball. I was relieved to see the Ivy Village children take the initiative.

The undergraduates’ service learning blogs (Appendix E) also show their realization of how interested the Ivy Village children were to have USC students there and how enthusiastic the children were to initiate interactions:

I got paired up with a little girl in the 4th grade named Kara. I could sense her enthusiasm immediately.

As soon as I arrived at Ivy Village, the children were so welcoming and polite, and again, I was caught off guard. I just had this impression in my mind that they wouldn’t be so personable or polite. I am very glad I got to experience this culture.

I was very hesitant going in on the first day because I did not think I would be accepted by the kids. I was so glad to see how quickly they opened up to all of us and how enthusiastic they were about the program.

The children’s enthusiasm for initiating relationships was not an expectation initially held by the preservice teachers, thus the children’s eagerness and self-initiation were critical to helping the university students overturn prior deficit notions. Almost every undergraduate participant commented at some point about how surprised they were that the Ivy Village children were so welcoming of them and that they took initiative not only to engage but to direct engagements and to support the preservice teachers’ self-confidence:

*Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* and my experience working each week with Sierra taught me that we really can’t judge a book by its cover. Going into this community service I made assumptions about the people I was going
to be meeting based on what we are socialized to think about people who live in low-income housing.

I was totally wrong about them. They didn’t want us to leave, were well behaved, and listened most of the time. They got attached to us very easily.

On one occasion we were asked to draw a picture of the characters in our book with chalk. I can barely draw stick figures. Kara jumped right in with confidence and said, “Why don’t we trace each other and then add some physical features of the characters in the book. I was so stuck in thinking that I wasn’t a good drawer. Thankfully Kara built up my confidence.

These kinds of experiences led to the preservice teachers’ early recognition that the Ivy Village children, rather than being apathetic and lacking initiative, were motivated and enthusiastic to be part of the program. The USC students began to recognize the children’s strengths and overturn deficit perspectives of the children and their families. Jean’s words provide a fitting encapsulation of the impact of the children’s relationships with the USC students on preservice teacher learning:

I was shocked to learn about Sienna’s favorite activities, hobbies, and favorite subjects. I learned that Sienna comes from a family of seven children. I also learned that Sienna had advanced reading and writing skills. In education classes throughout college, I have been told time and time again that factors such as family size, race, and living demographics all play a huge role in students’ reading levels. Yet, even up to this point I can see by literacy skills that Sienna is not part of this statistic that educators may assume. It really made me think about how many children as gifted as Sienna are in the same situation and their potential may never be noticed or reached.

As a teacher educator, it was important to recognize the impact of these relationships on the undergraduate students’ learning. Though I played a role by modeling ways to interact with the Ivy Village children, I recognize that the Ivy Village children played the primary role in forming relationships with undergraduate students that helped them learn to change their deficit views.
My relationship with the Ivy Village children. My relationship with the Ivy Village children grew stronger from the pilot study and into the dissertation study and provided an important model for the USC students. The Ivy Village children seemed to know that I cared about their interests and that I did my best to find books that they liked or asked for each week. They continually came up to me to share book titles that they were interested in reading. When I came around to talk to them, they seemed to know I was interested in what they had to say as I asked about their activities, interests, families, and hopes and dreams. I often asked about their families and they sometimes seemed surprised I would ask. The children never seemed shy or timid around me and appeared eager to share their thoughts and descriptions of their experiences with me.

It was important for the preservice teachers to witness how I interacted with the children and the children’s willingness and confidence to respond to me. One example of this acknowledgement (mentioned earlier this study), was when USC student, Maggie recognized Maeva’s willingness and ability to respond to me when I asked about books she had been reading. Maggie said, “I was also surprised that Maeva was willing to respond to Ms. Lisa so confidently because I often have trouble getting her to respond when I ask her a question.” She later reflected on the reason why she believed that Maeva began to open up more. Maggie explained, “Maeva was able to respond and open up more because I think she knew I no longer doubted her and believed in her more.”

These instances were important and impacted undergraduates’ learning as they began to adapt their behaviors by learning from mine. Observing my interactions with the children helped to shape their interactions or at least helped them gain positive perspectives as they developed relationships.
**My relationship with Ms. Bea.** While the impact of relationships with Tracy and the children was powerful, I believe that my relationship with Ms. Bea was most critical to the success of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. I learned through my conversations with her including final member checking, that we both considered our relationship a highly valued “partnership.” We bonded quickly and were always supportive of one another. Ms. Bea was a teacher to me as well as to the undergraduate students, and the Ivy Village children, families and community members and she showed her support for all of us. She was friendly, welcoming, and helpful from the moment Tracy and I met her at Ivy Village Apartments to explain the program. Although I do not have data that show preservice teachers’ reflections about my relationship with Ms. Bea, I think our relationship was important for them to observe as they dispelled their stereotypes about people working in low-income housing projects and began to recognize the importance of genuine relationships between schools and communities. Below I discuss specific elements in our relationship that reflect my role and my learning as teacher educator.

*Asking for feedback helped me recognize my own generalizations.* In January of 2011, after meeting Mrs. Bea with Tracy, I sent her the *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* handout (Appendix H) that I planned to present to Ivy Village parents and children on the first day of the program. It was similar to the handout used by Tracy in the other Freedom Readers programs. I asked Ms. Bea if she would review it for me and she sent the following corrections in bold:

3. Every young scholar is **expected encouraged** to participate consistently each week. **We have parents that work and are in school, depending where their kid needs to be, they may not be able to participate on that day of a particular week.**
5. The young scholars must arrive at each meeting by 4:00 pm. Doors will be locked at 4:15 and no young scholar will be allowed to enter the building after this time. Unless prior arrangements have been made with Ms. Bea. Again, we are allotting time for parents to get home from work or school.

6. If the young scholar(s) is walking or biking from home to the Community Center or if the parent or guardian is not able to check the young scholar(s) in, in person, the parent or guardian must notify Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners to indicate how the young scholar will be arriving, when the young scholar will be arriving, and who will be dropping the young scholar(s) off. If the young scholar does not arrive at the time or in the way the parent or guardian specifies the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately. Children are required to attend every day, and parents are required to contact Freedom Readers’ Literacy Partners ahead of time if an absence is anticipated. If an emergency should arise, call Ms. Bea or Lisa Reid or send a note with the young scholar to the next meeting.

Because this is an event done on IVA property thru the RSC’s office I would be the liaison for this event, therefore parents would need to contact me only, because I am responsible party on the property; then I would communicate information to you. We also have children that parents are working and I am responsible for them coming and making sure they return home.

7. Parents and guardians must pick up their child(ren) at 5:00 pm. If a parent or guardian does not pick up their young scholar(s) by 5:00 pm the young scholar(s)’s parents or guardian will be contacted immediately. Our children are allowed to walk home by themselves because of the way our community is designed. And those who need assistance getting home would be my responsibility (which has already been established before signing up).

8. The program leaders will only allow children to go home with those people who are listed to do so on the registration form. Parents or guardians may add people to this list at any time. This will also fall in line with #6 & #7. And I am aware of all the children and parents.

9. Young Scholar whose parents made arrangements with Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners to have their young scholar(s) walk or bike to the program, must remain at the center until 5:00 pm. If the young scholar leaves before 5:00 pm, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately and the young scholar(s) will be asked not to attend for one month. Our children are not allowed to leave any of our programs before time unless a parent is present or that parent has notified me in advance.

10. Once the young scholars leave they are not permitted to return again that day. This is not a necessary statement.

11. Once the young scholars leave the community center premises, Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners is not responsible for their safe return home. This is
not a necessary statement, because we (IVA) are not holding Freedom Readers responsible for the students. While in the community the children are IVA’s responsibility.

Ms. Bea’s corrections were eye-opening for me as it became embarrassingly obvious that I had generalized the Ivy Village community, management, and children and families as needing strict guidelines for effectively participating in the program. Rather than use someone else’s handout and generalizing the Ivy Village community based on Tracy’s stories of her experiences, I should have taken the time to sit with Ms. Bea and ask about her role and expectations and the Ivy Village community. Ms. Bea corrected my wording, from “expected” to “encouraged.” Ms. Bea provided language that she felt was more responsive and appropriate for her residents. I think it was also important for undergraduate students to read this revised wording because it reflected sensitivity to the participating families’ needs. Ms. Bea also explained why the rules that were listed in the handout were not necessary, and through the explanations, I learned the following about Ivy Village management and community:

- The parents of the children participating work and are in school.
- Ivy Village is very supportive of the parents and children and encourage them to participate in programs like Freedom Readers Literacy Partners.
- Ivy Village personnel (Ms. Bea especially) know the children and families living in the Ivy Village community and work closely with them.
- Ivy Village management takes responsibility for the children of Ivy Village with regard to after-school programs while they also care about them.
- Ivy Village management wants the children and families to succeed.
These were very important lessons for me and for the undergraduate students. I learned that no matter how a program is designed, it must be personalized for the community, the families, and the children and that it cannot be personalized without getting to know and draw from the expertise of community members themselves.

*Engaging as partners.* Developing a partnership with Mrs. Bea was also essential to not only our relationship, but added to insights that influenced the growth of my own sociocultural consciousness and the success of the program. Through a partnership in which we recognized and drew on each other’s expertise, I learned about and from Ms. Bea. She always provided suggestions such as how to arrange the tables to be more amenable to the children’s interactions with the USC students and when it would be appropriate to have the literacy partners work inside or outside for the day. Through my partnership with Ms. Bea, I learned how much she cared about the residents of Ivy Village and about her advocacy for education. This was important for undergraduate students to observe and experience as well, because it provided counter narratives to their dominant deficit views that children from low-income backgrounds lack community support.

It was obvious that Ms. Bea supported educational opportunities and resources for Ivy Village residents - especially the children. One component of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* was that children would take home a book every week to add to their home libraries. Ms. Bea often reminded me to make sure that children took home their books. She also explained that she was a liaison between Ivy Village and the local schools that the children attended, often speaking with teachers or the principals to let them know that Ivy Village management supported the children and families. She knew
which residents were in school and as they came in to talk to her, she would ask them about it and continually encourage them to work hard and continue until they graduated. She always expressed to them the importance of education - for them and their children:

I was talking to a resident who is in school and wants to change her major. I said, ‘I don’t care if you change your major as long as you stay in school! I don’t care how long it takes you to graduate just as long as you graduate! You need to do that for yourself and for your children!’

Another aspect of our partnership was Ms. Bea’s initiation of new ideas for Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. For example, during the pilot study, Ms. Bea suggested that the Ivy Village children visit the USC students on the university campus. She thought it would help the children envision possibilities for attending college themselves. Ms. Bea described the event as her “most exciting moment as a residence manager.” In the same way, she supplied residents of Ivy Village with information about resources for achieving their goals:

So when they come in here I am listening. If there is something I can gather from them, the first thing that I am going to do is put it in our newsletter, because people are looking for jobs. People want to go to school. I don’t expect for people to live here the rest of their lives. This is just an open door. We have a swinging door - come in and get yourself stable - and then move on to the next thing. That is what I did. I needed assistance at one time. I was in their place. So I say, “Why you’re here, gather the information.” And this reading program has allowed us to help too.

My relationship with Ms. Bea (Figure 8.3) led to significant learning for me and an overturning of my own prior assumptions. I had never imagined that a person in the position of residence manager within a government assisted residence community would have the opportunity or be in the position to support residents educationally, yet another example of my socialization to lower expectations for people outside of my middle and upper middle class worlds. I immediately came to see Ms. Bea as an advocate for the
education of the residents of Ivy Village, and as a teacher to me and the undergraduate students who participated in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 8.3. Ms. Bea and me at Ivy Village Apartments

When I was analyzing data, I called Ms. Bea to ask how she felt about her experiences with *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. I had not spoken with her for a few months, and discovered that she had moved to Arizona and was working in the Human Resources Department of a hospital. Her voice was as warm and welcoming as I had remembered it. We talked about various aspects of our lives and as always, ended up discussing the most important part of our lives - our daughters. Then I shared all that I had learned from her, quoting from my dissertation and beyond. I told her that the program would not have been possible without her partnership. She explained how much she appreciated the program and that, prior to it, she had tried to get businesses to come to Ivy Village to speak with residents and provide consultations or information:

People in the community were not very welcoming or willing to work with our residents. I continually tried to get businesses to donate their time or resources. I went over to a lawyer’s office across the street and asked if he could talk to our residents. He said, ‘we don’t do those services.’ It was like pulling teeth to get people to come out and do some community service.
She explained that working with *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* was exactly what she had been looking for, for the children of Ivy Village:

The structure of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners added value to what I wanted for the children. It was instrumental to their education. The opportunity to work with college students and actually go to USC was so valuable for the children because they may never be on a college campus. It got their attention focused on college.

I suggested that we made a good partnership; she said, “Yes! That’s exactly what it was – a good partnership!” She said that she wanted to run a program like *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* in Arizona and talked about possibly starting a non-profit literacy program to work with the Ak-Chin Indian community. We talked about some ideas for the remainder of the conversation and vowed to keep in touch.

**Elements of the Course that Impeded Learning**

Through this study, I have gained a better understanding of the elements of EDTE 400 that not only supported students’ learning but impeded it. The following section unpacks these elements: (a) course curriculum did not prepare students to fully understand the notion of *literacy partner*, (b) ineffective prompts for reflection, (c) lack of community among preservice teachers, and (d) lack of preparation and support to work with Ivy Village children.

**Course Curriculum Did Not Prepare Students to Understand the Notion of *Literacy Partner***

I do not think that course curriculum entirely prepared preservice teachers to feel comfortable and confident as literacy partners at Ivy Village. The angle from which I taught the course was from a *learning through experiences and interactions* perspective – not a *learning through community service* one. As such, while I believe that course
curriculum prepared students to better understand their identities and socialization and ultimately to recognize negative biases and stereotypes, I do not think they ever fully grasped the notion of working as *partners* with the children in support of the children’s learning. In other words, I do not think that the course assignments and experiences were powerful enough (or perhaps not long-term enough) to help them understand that their job was about learning *from* children (about their strengths, knowledge, literacies, etc.) and that such learning was for the purpose of informing their teaching.

**Ineffective Prompts for Reflection**

While some prompts were successful in urging students to reflect on prior deficit views, I believe that the service learning blog assignment (Appendix E) could have been structured more effectively. There was no expectation that the students would use their course readings and assignments to support their discussions of their Ivy Village experiences. I believe that student learning could have been strengthened if they had been required to connect theories and perspectives presented in class and through course texts, assignments, and discussions to their Ivy Village experiences. Though the service learning blog assignment asked students to complete field observations and reflections, it did not guide them to reflect on other course elements with regard to their experiences at Ivy Village. The blog assignment could have been restructured or I could have provided additional reflection assignments, exit slips, or online discussions each week that prompted students to connect what we learned through course curriculum to interactions and experiences in the site.

**Limited Depth in Relationships Among Preservice Teachers and With Me**
Considering data from this study, I speculate that a limited sense of community among the students and in their one-to-one relationships with me may have been an impediment to their learning. Had I helped preservice teachers feel a stronger sense of community as a group before going to Ivy Village, they might have felt more confident and comfortable being literacy partners with the children? Would they have exhibited and felt greater enthusiasm for and purpose in engaging with children at Ivy Village? One student, Evan, alluded to his expectation that they would become more of a connected group. He said, “When I first started I was thinking this was going to be more a group thing among us USC students.” In terms of my relationship with the students, I was able to form a connection with the four students who rode with me each week to and from Ivy Village, but I do not feel that I made the same connections with all of the preservice teachers.

So, while the first session at Ivy Village seemed promising as most of the undergraduates appeared comfortable with the children – playing with them, talking to them - I assumed they could continue to demonstrate that comfort each week. For some of the students this did happen, but for others it did not. As result, I left the course wondering: If I had helped students feel more connected as a group and developed relationships with each student as I did with the car-pooling group, might they have talked with me and each other more, and shared anxieties and fears allowing us to make concerns and confusions visible and talk through them? Might we, through closer relationships with each other, have been able to get beyond or underneath the body language and facial expressions from some students that seemed to signal boredom or apathy? Whatever the outcome might have been, I felt that an impediment to student
learning (my ability to understand and support them) was this limited sense of community comfort with each other.

**Lack of Preparation and Support to Work with Children**

Hand-in-hand with the impediment noted in the previous section, is my recognition that I could have provided better preparation and support of the USC students to work with the Ivy Village children. I noted a few times in my journaling about Ivy Village sessions (Appendix M) how disappointed I was that many USC students did not take the initiative to play with or talk to the Ivy Village children before sessions. In spite of the proactive relationship-building exhibited by the children, I did not always see that reciprocated by the USC students. While several preservice teachers seemed comfortable and engaged throughout sessions, several also seemed disengaged and uncomfortable. Half of the preservice teachers played with the Ivy Village children before sessions, and the other half - mostly the female preservice teachers - stayed inside the community center talking with each other or sitting quietly by themselves. Some of the USC students’ facial expressions and body language during sessions with the children often gave the impression that they were tired, uninterested, and/or eager to be done with the sessions. The following excerpt from my researcher’s journal reflects these observations on a typical day:

> When we were done reviewing the agenda, it was about 3:45. Some USC students remained standing there, while others sat down on the couches or chairs inside. A few students were yawning. I could clearly see the children playing outside on the basketball court or sitting at the picnic table. I remember specifically saying, "Ok. Everyone needs to go outside. Go play. You all need to wake up!" They went outside and stood there, around the picnic tables and the court.

I could not understand some of the preservice teachers’ resistance to playing with the Ivy Village children. I initially assumed that the USC students would become more
comfortable each week as they realized that the Ivy Village children enjoyed reading and engaging in the activities with them. In my journal, I wrote:

I was relieved that the Ivy Village children took the initiative; however, I was disappointed in my students for needing an invitation to play or talk with the children. The previous year, the USC students took the initiative and were the first to initiate conversation or interactions with children. I held similar expectations of this group of USC literacy partners. Ms. Bea also commented, ‘This group of USC students seems different than last year’s.’ I agreed with her but also wanted to be hopeful that things would change as sessions progressed.

I was disappointed to realize that I might have failed to prepare this group of undergraduates to take initiative in building relationships with children at Ivy Village. I did not realize that I needed to teach them the importance of their informal engagements with children, that they should take the initiative to engage with them, as well as how to interact with children. I made the mistake of believing that the ability to engage in comfortable interactions with children was a natural social skill for adults who plan to work with children as a career.

I learned through analysis of preservice teachers’ data that some of this reticence also came from students’ insecurity about their ability to work with the Ivy Village children. Several preservice teachers seemed uncomfortable or unsure about how to form relationships with the children or learn about them. Some preservice teachers majoring in secondary-level education were insecure or uncomfortable working with younger children. I believe I could have lessened their insecurity and discomfort through prior teaching about and demonstrating strategies for successful interactions with children. Though half of the USC students did eventually exhibit positive behaviors with the children, I kept holding onto the hope that most, if not all of them would eventually bond with and be more responsive to the children.
In addition, I did not realize that I needed to teach undergraduate students that it would be their responsibility to set up tables, chairs, books, and snacks. In my journal I wrote:

I assumed that since the introductory day went well and all tables and chairs were set up, that this day (the first actual tutoring session) would be the same. I was mistaken. Ms. Dee was preoccupied in her office with residents, so she was unable to direct the USC students to set up tables and chairs this week. I was disappointed that the students did not take the initiative to do this on their own. I started directing students to set up tables and set up snacks and drinks, and explained that I expected them to do this each week.

**Lack of Support for Helping Preservice Teachers Negotiate Challenges**

Another impediment to the students’ learning was the kind of support I provided (or did not provide) to help them address challenges they faced with the children. A vivid example of this is a situation reported in an email from Cassandra, at the end of the semester. She was distraught over events that took place after one of the *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* sessions. As Cassandra was helping another Ivy Village child with her homework, two of the children, Maeva and Makayla, began throwing things at Cassandra and making derogatory comments about her hair. Cassandra described the event as an “assault.” I was disappointed that the event occurred, because, over the semester, I had observed improvements in Maeva’s and MaKayla’s behaviors and their motivations with regard to reading and working with their partners. I worried because, of all USC participants, Cassandra was the only student who explicitly voiced fear prior to spending time at Ivy Village Apartments. I was afraid that this experience would confirm her original negative stereotypes about children in low-income housing.

When I asked Cassandra, during the member checking process, how she felt about the incident, she said that she had forgiven the girls for the choices they made that
day. But it was a strong reminder for me of the need to spend time helping the preservice teachers negotiate their feelings and perspectives at the time that events such as these occurred. I did not engage Cassandra in talking through her reactions with regard to possible reasons why the girls behaved as they did. Building on my earlier realization that I needed to build stronger relationships with each student, this incident demonstrated that, with stronger relationships developed through a system for having more one-to-one or small group conversations, I might have created important spaces for helping the preservice teachers negotiate concerns or challenges.

**Conclusion to Chapter Eight**

This chapter highlighted understandings about my role as the course instructor and site leader in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* in fostering undergraduates’ learning. Insights gained from the experiences shed light on possibilities for future community-based field experiences: elements of my role that are important to consider, supportive practices and impediments to student learning. In Chapter Nine, I build on the findings described in Chapters Four through Eight to address ways to structure and facilitate preservice teacher education experiences designed to engage students in developing introductory understandings about teaching and learning from a critical stance.
CHAPTER NINE

IMPLICATIONS

This study was developed to explore elements of a one-credit undergraduate course that included a community-based field experience and on-campus instructional components. The contexts and assignments of the course were structured to address the need for an entry-level education course that required preservice teachers to think about their socialized identities and positionality within systems of oppression and inequity and to then use those reflections to support the development of a critical sociocultural consciousness that students would use to challenge deficit views of children of Color living in low-income housing. This study was designed to explore the effectiveness and/or ineffective of other elements of the course in conjunction with such self-reflective efforts in the interest of helping preservice teachers understand the need for more equitable literacy practices and to promote positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities in a low-income, African-American community. The study also looked at my role as the teacher educator who designed and facilitated the course and included an examination of the development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness.

In sum, addressing the problems of the predominantly White teaching force in the United States with regard to their inability to meet the needs of increasingly diverse populations of P-12 students (Gay & Howard, 2000; Sleeter, 2001) and continued failures
to support the achievement of students’ of Color and children from low-income households and to serve all children equitably (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), this study sought to better understand how various aspects of a one-credit course that may or may not support preservice teacher learning. The study asked the following research questions:

What might preservice teachers learn from a one-credit hour undergraduate course developed to support them in understanding the need for more equitable literacy practices and to promote positive views of students’ and families’ identities, knowledge, and capabilities in a low-income, African-American community?

What specific elements of the course were supportive of teacher candidates’ learning? What elements impeded learning or were not supportive?

What can I learn about my role as the course instructor in fostering undergraduates’ learning?

What can I learn about the growth and development of my own critical sociocultural consciousness in the process of this study?

Findings from this study reflect pervasive and overwhelming socialization of the students and the teacher educator to racial identities that see Whiteness as normalized and superior in addition to being socialized to the normalization of Christianity, heterosexuality, traditional male-female gender roles, and middle class. Other findings demonstrate the effectiveness of specific course assignments, particularly (a) the foundational requirement for students to track their identity socialization and connect that socialization process to their positionality regarding issues of oppression and privilege, then to (b) use that foundation to reflect about their interactions around literacy activities with children in and around their community center, supported by (c) specific readings and a film/TED Talk, Adichie’s (year) Danger of the Single Story. Findings also consider
elements in my role as teacher educator that supported or did not support student learning as well as elements in the course that seemed to impede learning.

With those findings in mind, the implications outlined in this chapter focus on, (a) pedagogical suggestions for teacher educators as they design and teach one-credit, undergraduate courses grounded in critical and equity pedagogies, (b) advice for teacher educators as they engage in community-based field experiences with preservice teachers, and (c) considerations for programmatic development in teacher education committed to supporting critical multicultural teacher education. These educational implications are followed by a section outlining suggestions for further research in the field related to these issues.

Implications for Teacher Educators

One of the most meaningful and critical discussions within this dissertation study proved to be preservice teachers’ explorations of their social identities and socialization and their conversations or talk about their experiences or understandings of people from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. As I studied preservice teachers through their processes of reflecting on or talking about the events and experiences of which they believed shaped their perspectives, socialized racism appeared to be the most prevalent thread woven through their reflections about socialization to their ideologies and perspectives. In the process of reflecting on or talking about ways they were socialized to be racist or have racist dispositions, whether consciously or unconsciously, they showed discomfort and dissonance as well as some insight and growth. They also struggled throughout their reflections and talk with negotiating the contradictions within their
understandings of self. As a result, findings suggest the following implications for teacher educators.

**Define critical pedagogy.** Though the course described in this study was an entry-level, one-credit undergraduate education course entitled, *Learning through Community Service*, the aim of its pedagogical structure was to invite students to begin to engage in critical reflections in order to move in the direction of identifying inequity and becoming more aware of the need for more equitable teaching practices which is a necessary step in making a commitment to teach for true multicultural education and social justice education (Allen & Alexander, 2013). The narrative patterns within this study reflected critical insights I recognized within preservice teachers’ self-reflections; however, the “critical” in their understandings of critical reflection was lost in translation or misunderstood because conversations of what critical pedagogy is and why it is important were missing from discussions in class.

Discussions of what critical pedagogy is and why it is important can open students up to exploring power structures and dominant modes of exclusion. This study reflected that preservice teachers began to talk about the unfairness of stereotyping and were able to identify oppression and their positionality within oppression yet did not talk much about power structures and their role as teachers within them, partly because they did not understand the nature of and importance of doing so as part of an empowerment process for themselves. As I have learned throughout this study, critical pedagogy facilitates empowerment for all students but is very difficult to convey because students often do not understand or do not feel comfortable interrogating an increasingly “power-inscribed world where dominant modes of exclusion are continuously naturalized by
power wielders” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9). This is especially true when students are part of the dominant group that excludes.

Ways to begin discussions of critical pedagogy can involve interrogating the meaning of the word *critical* with students and forming a collective definition to use throughout the course (Turner-Nash, 2012). Interrogating the word “critical” could also accompany discussions of the basic concepts that constitute critical pedagogy. As part of a course such as the one described in this study, I believe it is important to explore some of these basic tenets (Kincheloe, 2008) of critical pedagogy in the beginning of the course:

- Teachers should be researchers – here teachers learn to produce and teach students to produce their own knowledge.

- Teachers should become researchers of their students – as researchers, teachers study (and learn about) their students, their students’ backgrounds, and the forces that shape their students’ identities and perspectives.

- Committed to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power structures

- Enact curriculum through the use of generative themes to understand the world and the process of problem posing – generative themes involve the educational use of issues that are central to students’ lives as grounding for the curriculum.

Table 9.1 provides a list of texts and resources that unpack tenets of critical pedagogy and that could be used by teacher educators as they develop exercises to support teacher educators in engaging critical discussions. Kincheloe’s (2005; 2007) and Shor’s (1992) texts provide ways to support students to acknowledge the need for critical pedagogy and to become critical researchers for change. The aim in helping students become more aware of the need for critical pedagogy is supporting them to desire to take a critical stance on equity issues in education and society and part of this process involves
identifying inequity as a result of privilege and oppression. Beginning to make commitments to resist effects of the dominant power structures is, first, to acknowledge that they exist (Johnson, 2006).

Allen’s and Alexander’s (2013) text offers a framework for K-12 teachers enacting curriculum that forces students to identify critical pedagogy in practice. One chapter in particular invites readers to understand what it means to take a critical stance with suggested questions such as:

- Who took action in the book?
- What risks did they take?
- What action did they take?
- What can you learn from each story? (p. 23)

While this activity was designed to engage elementary school children in critical discussions, it could be adapted to use within a college education course to explore issues of power and action.

Table 9.1. Resources for enacting tenets of critical pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Teacher educators can use other activities to help students become more aware of power and privilege so that they may further identify and resist the effects of dominant structures. Although these are not activities I used in EDTE 400, my findings suggest a need for further work that helps students identify the pervasive nature of Whiteness and so I offer these activities as techniques for bringing Whiteness to the surface which later can become supportive of examining Whiteness studies (as discussed in the following sections). The following describe a few exercises for exploring issues of power, privilege, and dominance:

- **Step Forward, Step Back**: Place a bottled water and Dixie cups at a table at the front of the room. Have students stand up and move to the center of the room. Tell them to imagine that they are on a life raft in the middle of the ocean and there is only one barrel of water. They will step forward or backward in response to questions (Appendix N). The person(s) who reaches the bottle of water first will decide how water will be distributed among everyone in the room. Once the activity is completed, have students discuss the activity in terms of power and privilege.

- **Movie Analysis and Discussion**: Have students make a list of the ten most important movies ever made, movies that reflect something powerful and enduring about the human experiences, about courage and personal transformation, the journey of the soul, the testing of the character, finding out who we really are and what life is all about. Once they have their list, have them identify the key characters in each, whose courage, transformation, journey, testing, and revelations are the point of the story (Johnson, 2006, pp. 100-101). Then have students identify the characteristics of these characters (gender, race, and sexual orientation). Have them identify what percentage of the U.S. population these characters constitute. Use this exercise to discuss privilege and power relations in American society. The same can be done with classic literary texts.

- **Power Shuffle**: Have students stand up and form a line on one side of the room. Tell them to follow instructions as you read through various questions/categories (Appendix O). Teacher educator says, "Please step to the other side of the room if you are. [the category]. [Pause.] Notice who's
standing with you. Notice who's not. [Pause.] Notice how you feel. [Pause.] Come back together again." Following the activity, facilitate a discussion using the questions (Appendix O).

In restructuring the syllabus for the one-credit course, EDTE 400, I would include basic tenets of critical pedagogy, engaging students in discussions of understanding them with regard to their learning in the course and community. I would also engage students in activities that prompt them to explore critical issues of oppression, power, dominance, and privilege.

**Require students to examine identities, socialization, and positionality; examine your own positionality as well.** Findings from this study imply that the assignment to construct Identities Narratives (Appendix D) was effective in helping students reflect on their identity with regard to various social identities (for example, gender, race, social class, sexuality, religion), how they had been socialized to each identity, and how each social identity positioned them within society. Findings further suggested that these examinations of identity are important for prompting students to self-reflect and discover new knowledge of self in relation to others and within and as a part of power structures. The components of reflecting on positionality as both a target and an agent of oppression supported students in acknowledging and considering their roles within oppressive systems. Reflecting on socialization and positionality were critical steps for undergraduate students in beginning to develop dispositions to understand and acknowledge racism and other discriminatory acts. It was an assignment that fostered critical reflection with minimal resistance, setting students in motion on a path to cultivating a critical stance in teaching. I have learned through this study that the process of self-reflection is necessary for expanding and deepening self-knowledge and for more
effective teaching and for students to be able to then construct counter narratives to
dominant deficit views. It requires looking closely at our own views, feelings,
backgrounds, experiences, and behaviors in relation to many issues of identity, race, and
racism.

Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011, pp. 20-21) suggest questions to prompt
deeper self-reflections to resist messages of racism, gain new knowledge, and learn new
behaviors that help to lessen or eliminate racism. Through the experience of conducting
this study, I see the need for further questions and prompts to support deeper student
learning, so I have chosen to list the Derman-Sparks and Ramsey questions that I believe
would have the most impact on college students’ critical self-reflections. They are:

- What are all my reference-group identities (race, ethnicity, national or
  regional origin of family ancestors, religion, gender, political affiliations,
  economic class, sexual orientation, ableness)? What does each mean to me?
  Which ones have most affected me at different points in my life?

- What cultural rules (values and behaviors) and traditions did I learn growing
  up? How have these shaped my teaching goals and practices?

- What assumptions and comfort levels do I have about White people who are
  Straight? Who speak with an accent? Follow a different religion? How do
  these assumptions and comfort levels influence my interactions with specific
  individuals?

- How did the family in which I grew up define success? How do I define
  success? How have my race, culture, gender, religion, and family background
  influenced this orientation?

- In what ways is Whiteness “the invisible norm” in my life? My community?
  My workplace?
Examine a framework for Whiteness studies. I also found that examinations of Whiteness are as important for the teacher educator as they are for students in a course designed to move all persons forward to making commitments to more equitable teaching (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011) because they help to bring to the surface socialized and embedded racism within our identities (Miller, 2012). However, being able to examine and discuss Whiteness Theory - our identities, ideologies, and perspectives as situated in Whiteness - requires preparation in the form of self-reflective practices (McIntyre, 1997). Because findings of this study revealed such a strong socialization to Whiteness, I suggest that examinations of a framework for Whiteness studies might support students in gaining more critical and rich insights from their identity narratives.

Part of examining a framework for Whiteness requires engaging in a process in which we become aware of misinformation, discomforts, prejudices and behaviors that reflect power relations and the reasons for them. Table 9.2 presents readings and video that could be used to build a framework for understanding Whiteness studies and engage students in reflecting on Whiteness and their White privileges.

Table 9.2. Texts and video for building a framework for Whiteness studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
My study also showed how White privilege and racism were hidden within and perpetuated by social identities such as religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class. These elements are part of Whiteness and can be explored along with it or as an extension of it. The movie directed and produced by Karslake (2008) present bias and discrimination of sexual orientation fueled by religious identity and agenda. McIntosh’s (1991) article addresses the privileges of both social class and race. Table 9.3 provides resources for activities that can be paired with the selected texts and videos listed above in Table 9.2 to foster discussions of privilege and oppression.

Table 9.3. Resources for activities to explore Whiteness and White privilege


Help students move beyond normalized views of “American” as White.

Analysis of data (my auto-ethnographic narrative, students’ narratives, and other data)
reflect that I interpreted students’ views as well as my own views of being American as heavily situated in Whiteness. In my analysis of data, there were instances when I may have read race into students’ comments because of the overwhelming realization of my own socialization to normalized Whiteness. For example, this may have occurred when Elizabeth and Evan described their memories of the 9/11 tragedy:

I came home from school that day and the news was on; they were trying to identify the group of people that attacked the world trade centers. Someone in my family said, ‘It probably was the Japanese.’ How could a group of people do something so hateful? I couldn’t help but feel repulsed toward whoever had done this. (Elizabeth)

Once again the media took part in socializing through religion as well. After 9/11 the media made it seem like such a terrible offense to be a Muslim and that all Americans were Christians. (Evan)

I described Elizabeth’s and Evan’s fears within these descriptions as fears of any person or entity outside the normalized view of what is “American.” However, I may have attributed these fears to fears of persons of Color rather than as fears of difference with regard to faith/religion or national identity.

Another example of how I interpreted students’ views as well as my own views of being American as heavily situated in Whiteness was in my analysis of one of Hannah Ruth’s descriptions of her experiences on a Christian mission trip to Nicaragua. She explained, “I met a woman in Nicaragua who assumed that all Americans were crazy cowboys who wanted to shoot people which was one of the most shocking things I have ever heard.” I may have further interpreted Hannah Ruth’s description of a Nicaraguan woman’s assumption of Americans as a fear of White persons. This is a reflection of how I might have normalized American as White based on my interpretation of my family’s socialization to Whiteness in America.
At the same time, evidence seemed clear that the students and I often associated American-ness with Whiteness; we had all been strongly socialized to a normalization of Whiteness which means that it is also likely that, when the students talked about Americans, they were associating that group of people with Whiteness. This reflection is important as I consider implications for my work as a teacher educator. It is essential that teacher educators probe beyond initial interpretations of students’ words to be able to clearly understand their intent and, if a normalization of dominant culture, race, or other identity factor seems to dominate their thinking, to interrupt it by pointing out how their words privilege one group, race, culture over another.

Help students recognize the fallacies of and move beyond a missionary stance. Findings within this study shed light on how preservice teachers revealed held to a missionary stance when perceiving and working with children from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In particular, a couple preservice teachers (Hannah Ruth and Katie) discussed their missionary experiences and perspectives during a small group interview and in their identity narratives. Hannah Ruth’s responses reflect challenges and contradictions of a missionary stance for moving toward understanding equity pedagogies. Katie revealed how she recognized missionary work and perspectives as problematic to respecting people and their culture. However, the tendency to default to a missionary or do-gooder stance tended to reappear at various points in the study reflecting its deeply embedded nature.

As I consider how I might address this issue in the future, I suggest engaging in more small group discussions and debates about these contradictory perspectives as they relate to developing intercultural relationships and committing to culturally responsive
teaching. Another way may involve creating scenarios to help students reflect on their own culture and how they would feel about people of another culture coming into their community to do missionary work in efforts to persuade them to change their cultural practices and perspectives. It would also be interesting to engage students in exploring language from preservice teacher data that reflect these fallacies and further discussing how statements and perspectives might be problematic or contradictory to culturally responsive teaching.

**Help students move beyond the myth of meritocracy.** Though only two students made comments most reflective of the meritocracy myth, the meritocracy myth is a common way for students and others in society to dismiss cultural, structural, and institutional issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and racism. It is often the myth most relied on when teachers try to make sense of why students of Color are not achieving. They attribute such failures to individual failures - of not taking advantage of opportunities and not using one’s full potential. A good place to start for supporting students to further reflect on the meritocracy myth is to have students discuss the “American Dream” and possibly debate the truth and fallacy behind the notion of the American Dream, drawing only on personal experiences and family histories. Alvarado’s (2010) article about dispelling the meritocracy myth is a helpful resource for engaging students in reflections and deeper discussions about the meritocracy myth and how it is present in their own perspectives. In her article, she provides lessons for teacher educators and a list of questions (pp. 16-17) to lead students in such reflections. These questions can be used to initiate discussions:
Beliefs on Meritocracy
What aspects of meritocracy do you believe to be true for yourself and others that you know?
How did you get to your current career position? Socioeconomic status?
How did your parents/guardians get to where they are now?
How did your best friend get to where he or she is now?
If you have or want to have children, what will/would you pass on to your children? How will that affect their future? How are the reasons you gave different and similar?

Conflicting Meritocracy Values
Which conflicting values of meritocracy do you agree with?
In what ways do they affect how you see yourself and others? (natural intelligence vs. hard work/equal opportunity vs. internal hires, nepotism, legacies, etc./earning a living vs. inheritance/ book smart (intelligence) vs. street smart (experience)/achievement vs. ascription

Meritocracy’s Effects on Behavior
How have you perpetuated meritocracy in your work?
What judgments have you made about students, coworkers, administrators, faculty members and their “success”?
What kind of advice have you given to others when asked about trying to succeed or reaching goals?

Action Plan
What action steps can you take to stop this cycle?
What can you do to change the behaviors exhibited in your answers to question three?
How can you take an active role as an educator?
How can you take an active role in the governance of your institution?

Teacher educators: Engage in your own self reflection. Many of the insights I gained form preservice teachers’ narratives resulted from my own self-reflective practice as I constructed and analyzed my autoethnographic narrative. Stories we tell about our own lives help us scrutinize our work and theorize our own experience (Cochran-Smith, 2000). As such, I did not realize until writing my narrative, how situated I was in Whiteness or what the specific lessons of Whiteness were that I learned. Some of the lessons I learned about Whiteness shape or influence my perceptions of myself with regard to choosing a racial identity, how and with whom I form relationships (particularly
romantic relationships), and how I choose to socialize my child. This has helped me identify the need to implement tenets of critical pedagogy and a framework for examining issues of oppression and privilege, Whiteness in particular, in facilitating the course. I did not realize how much my identity and socialization were embedded in and shaped by Whiteness and how it maintains racism to the point at which they cannot exist without the other. As such, determining these lessons in our own life’s stories can help teacher educators construct starting points for discussions about Whiteness in education courses.

These lessons can become apparent using self-study methodologies. Self-study in education involves making meaning of memories as they relate to self. Often when we write about self, we are in actuality, writing about the memories of our experiences that become our stories (Hayler, 2011). The following section provides suggestions for using memory methodologies to begin discussions of individual and institutional systems of oppression and privilege.

**Memory methodology toolbox.** An implication of my study is that self-narrative is a good place to begin writing about one’s life, and that memories from these narratives can be deconstructed and notions of Whiteness within identities and identity history can be examined. The exercises I describe as part of what I call a memory methodology toolbox, while not a tried and true practice as a result of this study, these ideas are aligned with the purpose of EDTE 400 and the findings about the power of self-reflection. Because teacher educators facilitating such courses must build awareness about their own positionality, this is suggested for teacher educators, but also for education candidates,
and/or preservice teachers. These ideas are developed as a direct result of methods I developed and used to track and reflect on my own history.

*Family tree and ancestry.* Creating a family tree can be the most basic and initial exercise to trace family history and begin to remember memories of the past or memories of stories told by family members of the past. Constructing a family tree can also provide a template of people who can be interviewed or who can be remembered for their stories. As I constructed my narrative, I naturally reflected on my relatives in Italy, then on their immigration to American, and finally on their new life in American. My identity socialization was directly tied to my family’s history; therefore, these stories had to be told as part of my memory of identity and socialization. Some questions I formulated after reviewing the construction of my narrative that could help teacher educators reflect on their life history in the process of creating a family tree are the following:

- What is your earliest memory of your family’s origin? What memories can you share about your grandparents? Parents? Other relatives?
- What stories do you remember hearing as a child of your parent’s childhood? Of your grandparents’ childhood?
- How were race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, gender roles, and class communicated to you? Taught to you?
- What challenges, struggles, misfortunes, or inequities did you hear your parents and/or your grandparents share about their lives in the past? Why did they experience them? What are the stories that accompany those challenges?
- What did your grandparents or parents most value in life? What statements do remember hearing that communicated what they valued?
- What stories did you hear your family members share about people different from yourself – people of Color or people from different cultural backgrounds?
Many of the stories within my autoethnographic profile provided rich, detailed responses to these questions. The content in the responses reflected new insights about my family’s history, assimilation and acculturation to American society, and childhood and upbringing. I was able to identify lessons of Whiteness and socialized racism from these responses.

*Life-history interviews.* Sometimes, especially when teacher educators or prospective teachers have few memories of their family’s ancestry and history, they can engage in small-scale life-history interviews with family members. Self-reflective life-history methodology (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) can help memories surface that illuminate issues of oppression and privilege. Life-history interviews can elicit stories from family members that are also part of our stories of identity. They often provide pieces that can more fully complete understandings of identities.

Though I did not formally use life history methodology in my study, my narrative tells stories that lend insight into the history of my family’s immigration to American and the historical context of their learning Whiteness. Many times throughout writing my narrative for this study, I had conversations with my relatives about our family history. I often asked my uncle, who immigrated to American prior to my father’s arrival, to share his memory of his experiences. He often shared details of his as well as my father’s experiences that I detailed within my narrative. Questions I asked were similar to the following questions:

- What was life like in your native country?
- What is your earliest childhood memory? What are some of your most memorable childhood memories?
- What jobs did your parents do in your native country?
• What were your hobbies in your native country?

• Did you go to school in your native country? What was your schooling like in your native country?

• Can you share the story of your immigration experience?

• Where did you live when you first came to America? What was life like when you first came to America?

• Where did you go to school in America? What were your first schooling experiences like in America?

• Who did you spend the most time around when you came to America? Who were your friends? Can you share memorable stories about the times you shared with your friends?

• How did you meet your spouse? Tell me the story about how you knew you wanted to marry your spouse?

Life-history and life-story interviews can also reflect responses that shed light on socialization to be racism. The historical memories I wrote about and pieced together with the help of my relatives provided a basis for discovering lessons of Whiteness that taught my family and reflected socialized forms of racism. Specifically, I gained a better understanding through my narrative of how my grandparents, my father, and my additional relatives were some of the European immigrants that Roediger (2005) describes as buying into the myth of White supremacy to legitimize membership in the dominant group and gain economic privilege. Many immigrants learned the advantages of being White and distanced themselves from Blacks in the process of becoming Americanized and identifying as White rather than as a person of Color (Brodkin, 2002; Guglielmo & Salerno, 2003).
Whiteness Collages. Major findings from the narratives presented in this study confirm that the notion of Whiteness is embedded in racial hierarchies that fuel racism and that beginning with examinations of Whiteness makes visible socialized discrimination and racism that can become starting points for discussion. Another way to make visible the messages of Whiteness that socialize racism is through creating visual Whiteness collages.

Collages can provide teacher educators, teacher candidates or preservice teachers with a visual that illuminates Whiteness. Similar to McIntyre’s (2002) collages implemented to encourage prospective teachers to construct meaning via a visual representation of Whiteness and pervasive White messages that we hear in society. I suggest collages as a simple exercise for students engaged in writing self-reflective narratives. Patterns from findings in this study reflect messages of Whiteness with which preservice teachers and I were continuously bombarded. Thinking of my own narrative, I would make a collage of messages about the lessons that my father learned in Whiteness such as, Choose a race, and choose wisely!, Learn to speak English! Lose your accent!, and Don’t associate with people of Color!

From findings in this study, the lessons in Whiteness from my narrative and the preservice teachers’ narratives could supply data in the form of Whiteness messages that could become elements in a collage. Photos or clipping from magazines or newspapers could accompany the messages of Whiteness. Creating these collages in smalls groups could be just as effective as creating them individually. This also provides a way for students to further examine their reflective narratives for these messages of Whiteness and discrimination or racism. As students create these collages to reflect the Whiteness
messages they have learned and continually encounter, it can be paired with a critical writing and/or discussion activity in which they reflect on the privileges they gain from each message as well as how those privileges meant the oppression of others.

**Support students in identifying forms of socialized discrimination and racism.** Just as it unfolded in the discussions of findings in this study, racism surfaces from explorations of Whiteness in self-reflective narratives because it becomes so evident when ideological systems are identified in those narratives. For example, in this study, over and over again, White was associated with good, correct, and normal, while Color was described as bad, evil, or insane. Feagin (2000) calls it “ideological racism” [and says that it] “includes strongly positive images of the White self as well as strongly negative images of the racial others” (p. 33).

Once learned Whiteness (or other learned isms) is exposed through self-reflective writing, questions can be posed for examining narratives for elements of society and the institutions within it (historical, political, economic, etc) that lead to racist perspectives. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011), provide reflection questions that can initiate further reflections from narratives and life-histories/-stories with regard and emphasis on Whiteness, privilege, and racism:

- What do you know about your extended family’s history that relates to the history of racism and Whiteness in the United States? What types of discrimination or privilege and economic advantages or disadvantages did they experience? How easily did they assimilate? What happened to their ethnic identity and cultural heritage in the process?

- How do you think your extended family’s history shaped your family’s history shaped your family’s views about other groups” Your groups growing up? Now?
How did you experience the “entitlement” and the norm of Whiteness when you were growing up? Now?

In what ways do you think the White families and children with whom you work receive benefits or advantages from being White in our current society? In what ways do you and they experience the cost of racism?

Where do you stand regarding the current realities and differing beliefs about the continued existence of racism discrimination?

What expressions or acts of racism have you witnessed, heard, or read since the 2008 presidential election? (pp. 43-44)

As students begin to identify forms of racism in society and in their lives, readings that discuss the dynamics of systemic racism can further their understandings. I suggest that readings or selections from these texts as well as the websites I have listed (Table 9.4) will support students in better understanding how to negotiate meanings within their new awareness.

Table 9.4. Websites and Films to Support Race Talks with Preservice Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Implicit: Hidden Bias Quiz (Website) <a href="http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/">http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/</a> <a href="http://www.tolerance.org/hiddenbias">http://www.tolerance.org/hiddenbias</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (website) <a href="http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/cb_color_blindness">http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/cb_color_blindness</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Color of Fear (film) <a href="http://www.stirfryseminars.com">http://www.stirfryseminars.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, The Power of an Illusion (film and website) <a href="http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm">http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Discussions of Whiteness and Race.** This study also implies that identifying elements of racism in self-reflective narratives and reading about the dynamics of systemic racism need to be paired with careful conversation if we are to prepare students to engage in discussions about race. The discussions I had with students as we drove back and forth to Ivy Village seemed to move students further along and helped me understand their perspectives and histories. However, time was not planned for similar conversations with the other students. I think this would have been highly beneficial. I recognize that conversations about race can be difficult even within the confines a three-credit hour education course, and that they can be even more difficult in an entry-level, one-credit course; however, broaching conversations about race are possible in these spaces. It is important, considering that this might be students’ first and only experience having discussions about race, that guidelines are established for classroom discussions.

*Guidelines for class discussions on race.* It may be a good idea to involve students in the developing norms for classroom discussions, so that they each have the opportunity to offer suggestions of norms that will be help them feel more comfortable. Adam, Bell, and Griffin (2007), provide further guidelines for facilitating discussions on race:

- Set your on boundaries.
- Speak from experience, avoid generalizing about groups of people.
- Respect confidentiality (do not share personal information shared in class in other settings)
- Share air time.
- Listen respectfully to different perspectives.
No blaming or scapegoating.

Focus on your own learning.

Respect different experiences and perspectives. (pp. 67-68).

Convincing students to care. There have been many times during this experience when I was met with resistance by undergraduate students as we have had discussions about race, oppression, and inequity. Some students became defensive and used examples of reverse racism to try to prove that these talks were unnecessary. As a result, I believe that one important thing for teacher educators to do is to make their stance, rationale, and efforts to work toward social justice known to students (Kincheloe, 2008) and to remind them of that often. I often shared insights I gained from my reflections on my own identities and inequitable teaching practices. The following represent good questions to ask students during discussions or writing reflections:

- How do I feel when others stereotype my own gender, racial, cultural, economic, or religious group? How do I respond? What do I do in these situations?

- How do I feel when I hear or see others (family, friends, or coworkers) make prejudiced remarks, or act in discriminatory ways? What do I do?

- How do I feel when I hear children making stereotypical or negative comments about people’s identity? How comfortable am I talking with children about ideas and attitudes? What are the sources of any discomfort I feel? (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011, p.146)

Build comfort. Findings from this study shed light on many moments when preservice teachers voiced feeling uncomfortable talking about certain social identities, especially with regard to race, sexual orientation, and religion. I learned that these identities, though challenging for students to discuss, are the most valuable ones about
which to engage them in discussions. Having gained insights from preservice teachers’ narratives, I would ask further questions such as:

- What social identities were you most uncomfortable discussing? Why do you think they were difficult for you to discuss?
- In what ways would you find it more comfortable to talk about these social identities?

**Supporting critical self-reflection assignments.** As a result of this study, I believe that engaging teacher candidates or preservice teachers in critical explorations of themselves, the world around them, and their experiences learning in a community-based setting is essential for them to experience transformative learning. I draw from my study’s findings to provide these suggestions to support critical reflection because these efforts were most effective in helping students become more aware of their identities, positionality, socialized discrimination and racism, and process of transforming perspectives from deficit descriptions of children to positive views of their identities, knowledge, and capabilities.

**Critically reflective narratives.** Findings from my study suggest that critically reflective narratives can provide insights for both the teacher educator, as researcher of his or her students, and the students for moving toward committing to multiculturalism, social-justice ideals, and educational equity. Suggestions in the previous sections help to prepare students for critically reflecting on their own identities allowing them to embark on a deeper understanding of elements of their socialization that have shaped their identities and positioned them in society. Although I believe that further emphasis on and defining of critical pedagogy and Whiteness theory would have deepened this work, as this study reflected, students’ narratives became starting points for critical discussions.
of dominant power, race and racism, discrimination, and inequity, because they provide layered experiences for discussions.

Life-story interviews. I noticed that preservice teachers’ responses during the small group interviews I conducted delivered rich stories of their experiences as children with regard to their social or schooling experiences. The small group interview questions (Appendix G) I constructed invited students to share stories about their lives and allowed them to elaborate on stories told in their identity narratives. Two of the questions from the small group interview questions that were the most valuable in soliciting life stories related to identity socialization were: (a) What is your culture? Share some information about your culture, and (b) What have been your experiences with people from racial and ethnic groups different from your own? These questions led to the most in-depth and detailed stories of preservice teachers’ experiences providing groups members with opportunities to learn more about themselves and other group members as they move forward in examining identity and understanding their own experiences and experiences of people from backgrounds different from their own.

In addition to the questions I asked during small group interviews, my familiarity with Johnson’s (2007) Life History Protocol suggests further questions that might support these kinds of conversations:

What were the most prevalent stories you remember hearing as a child?

What do you remember as the most significant theme within the stories?

What do you remembering fearing as a child? Do you remember ways your parents socialized you to fear people, places, or experiences?

Life-histories and life-stories can be starting points for students to reflect on their lives and identify elements within them that can facilitate critical discussions on
Whiteness and socialized biases, discrimination, and racism. Once examined, these stories can be retold with an expanded, and perhaps anti-racist, awareness

**Examining narrative excerpts and re-telling stories.** One insight gained from this study was that preservice teachers needed opportunities to examine their own stories so that they could re-tell them to show an expanded sense of awareness. Patterns discussed in Chapter Four show how preservice teachers were able to identify aspects of socialized racism within their stories of their social identities and socialization; however, they were unable to further process them or deconstruct them to gain a more critical and clear understanding. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe the role of retelling stories as central to further understanding self:

> Narrative for us is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future. Deliberately storying and restorying one’s life or a group of cultural story is, therefore a fundamental method of personal and social growth: it is the fundamental quality of education. (p. 24)

One way to engage students in examining selections from their narratives and begin to re-tell their stories is to provide them with excerpts from their narratives that reflect experiences centered on race, discrimination, or inequity along with carefully constructed questions to support them in delving deeper and more critically into understanding their story in a new way. It is from this new awareness or understanding that students can be encouraged to re-tell or expand their stories.

**Counter narratives.** Another finding of this study was the impact of counternarratives for encouraging preservice teachers’ transformative learning processes through their participation in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners. In fact, the success of the Identity Narrative assignment was only fully realized when it was paired with the
assignment to construct a counter narrative – the Service Learning Share at the end of the semester. This required students to use their experiences at Ivy Village to rethink their initial assumptions about children and families and, in most cases, to challenge initial deficit views.

Counter narratives play a role in encouraging students to reconstruct lived experiences into powerfully, transformative narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 2008; Milner, 2008). Counter narratives can be effective ways for them to challenge previous biases and interrupt single, deficit-laden stories of children and families form backgrounds different from their own (López-Robertson, Long, Turner-Nash, 2010). Though counter narratives are typically stories told by oppressed persons or persons who bear the most inequities in society in attempts to contradict dominant and inaccurate, negatively biased views and ideologies (Duncan, 2006), having preservice teachers construct counter narratives that challenge their own and other’s deficit and inaccurate views can promote a focus on reversing deficit trends.

**Make reflections on process visible to students.** The assignments that I designed for preservice students to reflect on the process of their learning were the Service Learning Shares/presentations (Appendix F) and their Blog Reflections (Appendix E). Through these assignments I was able to discern the process that most preservice students experienced as they formed relationships with children and gained new, positive perspectives of their identities, interests, knowledge, and capabilities. However, I am not sure how visible the process was for preservice teachers. As part of thinking more critically about a process, I suggest that students should be engaged in some sort of
activity that requires them to focus on their own reflections. One strategy is through process mapping.

Process mapping. One way for students to better understand the process of their learning is through mapping their learning. To do this, I would incorporate strategies that I used in the process of data analysis, seeking patterns in students’ reflections as well as my own. As such, I was able to identify preservice teachers’ initial assumptions of Ivy Village children and then counter those assumptions with selections in which they described learning about the children and voicing more positive views. Preservice teachers’ could engage in the same process.

I suggest this because, after conducting this study and examining my own and students’ process of transformation, I think it is very important for preservice teachers to visually see the process of transformative learning for themselves. Preservice teachers in this study demonstrated a process of transforming their perspectives, but there were also challenges that occurred in the process. Noting these challenges helped me become more aware of how to support them and, in the same way, I think it could help preservice teachers identify points of confusion, contradiction, fear, assumption and then to address those issues having taken the first step – recognizing them.

Advice for Teacher Educators as They Engage in Community-Based Field Experiences with Preservice Teachers

This study shows that the relationships developed within the community site (Ivy Village) supported learning and developing dispositions to counter deficit views of children and their families. This leads me to offer some suggestions for teacher educators who provide community-based field experiences for prospective teachers.
Recognize the importance of forming relationships with community members. Findings from this study suggest that teacher educators place great emphasis on forming genuine and reciprocal relationships with the individuals in community sites as well as with the undergraduate students who accompany you into the site. The relationships I formed with Ms. Bea and the children and families of Ivy Village helped to make the program a success for them and led to deeper learning for me.

The relationship Ms. Bea and I developed was essential to the success of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners and to my own learning. Though I learned about Ms. Bea throughout multiple conversations that occurred throughout the program, I have reflected on the need to have these conversations prior to starting the program. I think it would have been a good idea to spend more time with her initially. For example, I could have brought lunch to her office or just stopped in to have conversations about her role in the community and her hopes for the program. I could have become involved in the community with her guidance – attending other activities at the community center, getting to know families and community members outside the USC connection.

Based on what I learned from Ms. Bea’s when she shared her stories in conversations with me through our growing relationship, questions that might help teacher educators make more informed decisions with the aim of their program include the following:

- Tell me about your role in the community? Tell me about your role in your position as a residence manager? What do you feel is your purpose in this position? What do you think is important for me to know about you?

- What do you think we (teacher educator and undergraduate students) should know about the community and the people who reside in the community?
• Why do you think the program will be a good fit for the children and families of this community? What would be the best format for such a program?

• What would be the best way to communicate this program to members of the community?

• What are your expectations for the program and our participation in the program?

• What do you most value with regard to your role in this community – for yourself, the children, the families, the residents?

• What misperceptions do you think the students might have of the children and the community and how might we best work to counter those misperceptions?

Another important aspect of the relationship that Ms. Bea and I developed was talking beyond the logistics of the literacy program. We talked about our families, our daughters, and our roles as mothers and teachers. Ms. Bea’s daughter was part of the program, so I was able to meet and talk with her throughout sessions and I brought my daughter to Ivy Village to meet Ms. Bea, participate in the program, and get to know the Ivy Village children. As findings from my study reflected, the relationship that the two of us formed fostered comfort and confidence because of the continual support she provided. It was important for undergraduate students and the children and their families to witness the relationship Ms. Bea and I had formed and our work together to support learning for everyone participating in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners.

**Support preservice teachers in forming relationships with the children.** As the preservice teachers and I interacted at Ivy Village, three strategies seemed to be most effect in forming relationships with the children: (a) interacting with the children through play, (b) providing texts of their choice and reading together, and (c) engaging in literacy activities that interested them.
Become comfortable with each other through play. Several participants in this study were more comfortable with the children than the other participants. Before and after program sessions, those are the participants who played with the Ivy Village children - on the play-set that was on the playground or the basketball court. At the beginning of each session, five Ivy Village children and five USC students on mixed teams would play a game of basketball. The children were often waiting for the USC students to play. Playful interactions like these on the children’s turf were very important for helping all participants feel more comfortable with each other. Play helped ease tensions as the preservice teachers loosened up and connected more with the children.

Connect with each other through books and reading: give children some ownership and choice in the process. The preservice teachers and Ivy Village children also connected with each other through the practice of reading. The children were able to make book selections. This was very important to them, because it showed them that we valued what they were interested in reading. Since two books were purchased and preservice teachers read the same book that their partners chose, there was a mutual demonstration about interest in reading. Through reading together, preservice teachers became aware that the children were avid, motivated, and strong readers and that most of the children were able to read and comprehend what they read very well. Literacy partners often engaged in discussions about the books they were reading, and as this study demonstrated, preservice teachers were able to learn more about the children through these discussions. Following are some ways that this study suggests that preservice teachers can be supported in developing relationships with children around books:
• Involve preservice teachers in finding out what books the children are interested in reading or what topics interest them.

• Teacher educator should purchase sets of the books for children and their partners.

• Teacher educator and preservice teachers should continually ask children about the books to let them know that you are interested in the book they are reading.

Get to know each other through other literacy activities. The literacy activities I created for literacy partners provided them with opportunities to further get to know and bond with the Ivy Village children. Most literacy activities helped partners connect because they required that the literacy partners worked together to discuss the book or to represent or present them in some way to the other literacy partners. Following are a few of the activities that preservice teachers identified or that I observed as being the most effective in helping literacy partners connect. I suggest these as activities as implications for similar courses:

• BINGO “Getting to Know Each Other” Activity (Appendix I)

• Creating Literacy Partner Books (one example, Appendix J)

• Creating Collaborative Poetry (one example, Appendix K)

• Side-walk chalk book themes (representing book themes on the basketball court)

• Making Text-to-Self Connections

Recognize the importance of developing relationships with and among the preservice teachers. One finding from this study indicated that preservice teachers did not feel completely comfortable with each other and that this might have had some effect on their comfort and confidence with the experience as a whole. I did not realize before
this study, how much encouragement undergraduates would need to feel comfortable and confident within the community site. I assumed that since I was comfortable and the children and Ms. Bea were so welcoming and eager to interact with the preservice teachers, that they (preservice teachers) too would feel more comfortable. This finding led me to believe that it is essential that preservice teachers who engage in this kind of course form a sense of community with each other before entering the community site and throughout the experience. Though I held a short orientation meeting before sessions began and I thought preservice teachers would form relationships while in the community site, I think that I, as the teacher educator, could have supported them more. The following are ways I think could have helped us, as a group, creating more opportunities for us to talk about their experiences and concerns throughout the semester:

- Orientation with food and activities for getting to know each other
- Informal meet-ups at the university student center, deli, or coffee house on campus to discuss experiences within the community site – spread out a few times throughout the semester
- Special snacks or notes of encouragement throughout the community experiences
- Online discussion forums set up for preservice teachers to discuss their experiences
- More one-to-one and small group opportunities to talk informally in the same way that the students who rode with me to Ivy Village and I were able to talk through ideas and issues in the car.

Problematize culturally irrelevant, culturally biased, and/or mono-cultural experiences. There were times during the implementation of Freedom Readers Literacy Partners at Ivy Village, that I could have provided more culturally responsive texts and
activities for the children as well as more culturally responsive teaching models for the preservice teachers, but those instances were often the result of my attempt to embrace the suggestions provided by Ms. Bea. As noted in Chapter Three, Ms. Bea suggested that I provide a variety of texts rather than texts that were primarily reflective of African American culture (books that I chose to reflect the African American children with whom we worked at Ivy Village). Ms. Bea explained that, as a government funded property, she had to ensure that various cultures were reflected in our texts and activities. I respected Ms. Bea’s suggestions because I was respectful of her and her role and responsibilities within the community as well as her views about the needs of the children at Ivy Village. Another example was the Easter celebration at Ivy Village. Ms. Bea suggested and planned Easter activities and I supported the preservice teachers in engaging in those activities with the children.

Implications from these experiences suggest teacher educators might honor community practices during the on-site experience, but then problematize those practices with the preservice teachers during campus-based discussions. Such discussions might revolve around questions such as:

- In what ways might we have embraced the community’s celebration of Easter while also adding to students’ knowledge about other belief systems, spring celebrations across cultural and faith-based groups?
- How might you construct culturally relevant holiday practices in diverse classrooms?
- What is limiting about a holiday-based exploration of culture?
• How might the study of one religion’s or community’s practices marginalize anothers?

In addition to engaging preservice teachers in deconstructing such experiences, looking back on my relationship with Ms. Bea, I think that I could have engaged her in conversations about how we could validate the Ivy Village children’s celebrations while broadening their knowledge of other belief systems. For teacher educators engaging in community-based experiences, this seems to be an important part of the relationship with community members.

**Considerations for Programmatic Development in Teacher Education**

Most teacher educators recognize the achievement gap between White students and those of Color and those from low-income households and acknowledge that programs of teacher education have a responsibility to address this gap (Miller et al, 2011; Powers-Costello et al, 2011); however, programs of teacher education are not yet successfully preparing their students to teach students of Color or students who speak languages other than English (Souto-Manning, 2010b; Opokodu, 2007). While this study focused on what could be accomplished in a one-credit course, it is clear that even the suggestions provided in the first half of this chapter would require more time than the context of a one-credit course allows. Thus, implications from this study also suggest programmatic change that includes institutional awareness and understanding of: (a) the importance of developing a foundational focus on issues of equity within and across programs, (b) the potential for entry-level, one-credit courses to have an effect on student learning, and (c) developing networks of support for graduate assistants or adjuncts who take on such efforts.
Develop a foundational focus on issues of equity. The context of this study was an entry-level, undergraduate education course. It consisted of six sections that were taught by three professors. It is a course called Learning through Community Service and each professor shared the same syllabus – one that had been in place for at least 10 years. I was hired as a graduate teaching assistant to teach all six sections of the course and given the opportunity to restructure it. With the exception of the one meeting I had with two professors who were considering whether or not to keep the course as required for the elementary, middle, and secondary education programs, I did not meet with anyone else to discuss the course. The course was basically a stand-alone course within each of the degree programs. Implications regarding issues that might be included as instructors might come together to strand such a focus through their programs are suggested below.

Be prepared to address resistance from students about a focus on equity issues. I recognize that resistance may be experienced from students and from colleagues in attempts to create a foundational focus on equity issues. In my experience the only resistance to the course came from a handful of students who were uncomfortable with the readings or discussions of socialization, oppression, discrimination, and racism, however I realize that resistance at deeper levels often occurs (Picower, 2009)). I believe that several strategies would have been helpful for me and would provide support for other teacher educators working to teach in similar ways.

Create an equity-based program or departmental mission statement and make it visible to students as the department’s united commitment. Borrowing from a former colleague (Turner-Nash, 2012) who wrote about the importance of including the departmental mission statement on her course syllabus to make known the commitment
that institution, I also suggest this as one way to respond to potential resistance from students by using it as a part of the written explanation of the course in the course syllabus. At the university in which this study was conducted, the college mission statement states:

We honor our responsibility to contribute to the high achievement of all learners and the development of an educated populace. Pursuant to this responsibility, we are committed to developing and sharing our expertise and leadership as well as offering a forum for educational dialogue and advancement. This commitment entails … Preparing educators to have a sincere understanding and appreciation of diversity as we challenge ourselves and others to work for social justice. (http://www.ed.sc.edu/VisionAndMission.asp)

Support faculty in making commitments to learning about issues of equity. It is unlikely that courses across College of Education programs will focus on issues of equity when equity methodologies are not a focus for foundational commitments agreed upon by faculty within and across higher education programs. It seems clear that professional development is needed for programs’ faculties. I participated in a campus-wide diversity dialogue seminar that the College of Education held one year. It was part of the group of graduate students and faculty members who engaged in diversity dialogues with each other for a few days before leading diversity discussions as a whole group of College of Education faculty. I was very excited to be part of this group. I had expectations of having rich and insightful discussions of race and racism. I thought that participation in the dialogues would inform ways I could initiate dialogue about race and racism in classes with undergraduate students. The diversity dialogue experience was unsuccessful. It shed light on the effects of the absence of such dialogue within the College of Education and the resistance of some faculty members to understanding the need for these discussions. I realized that if College of Education faculty and graduate students
found it challenging to talk about race with each other, then it would be similarly challenging to foster discussions of race within undergraduate course. If these dialogues could be more successful in facilitating discussions, creating spaces where all persons would be open to them, then these dialogues could potentially transform courses and programs.

There are many texts that can help faculty members facilitate discussions of race and racism as they consider creating an equity foundation for their work together. These texts provide basic understandings of Critical Race Theory in education, issues faced by people of Color in Academia, and challenges of Whiteness for committing to issues of equity:


Recognize that it *is* possible to have impact in a one-credit course. This study showed possibilities for a one-credit course in helping undergraduate students begin exploring their identities, biases, stereotypes, and deficit-laden assumptions and to consider that they mean in the context of socializing structures and experiences and overturning deficit views of children and families. Though there were only six class sessions and limited numbers of readings, discussions, and assignments, students were able to begin discussions about their role in discrimination and inequities. They were able to identify some issues of oppression and privilege in their own lives and to counter some of their initial stereotypes and deficit views of children and families. Thus, I believe that a one-credit course can become an effective space for starting the conversation. Because specific elements of that experience were particularly effective, I suggest them as implications below.

*Make room for community-based field experiences.* Participation in field experiences in underserved communities has been regarded as a positive method of teacher preparation because these opportunities allow most preservice teachers to disrupt their own biases and to challenge the deficit paradigm (Sleeter, 2008). Moreover, research suggests that cross-cultural, community based field experiences can potentially enhance teacher education programs because they give preservice teachers insight into children’s lives outside of school (Coffey, 2010). Findings from this study demonstrate the effect of these community placements for most of preservice teachers in the study.
The community-based component was essential to the development of students’ sociocultural competence and ability to recognize biases and deficit assumptions and overturn them with learned, positive perspectives of children. Without that component there would have been no venue for students to first record their assumptions about a specific community and later challenge those assumptions through guided firsthand experience. Thus, while a one-credit course may seem like a short period of time to be able to both read and complete assignments and engage in communities purposefully, it is possible and essential.

Develop training for graduate assistants and adjuncts who take on these efforts. In my experience, one-credit courses like the one described in this study are often passed off to graduate assistants. I believe, however, that efforts like these could be enhanced if networks of support were available for instructors. I have never been invited to faculty meetings or any discussions outside of those I have learned about and signed up for on my own. Including graduate assistants and adjuncts in some way could provide insight for them. This suggests that, if institutions are sincere about committing to equity issues and making programmatic changes that enact this kind of shift, they must set up support systems for all faculty, including graduate teaching assistants and adjunct instructors. Some strategies for creating these inclusive networks of support within higher education for equity work might be to:

- Create and participate in faculty-wide professional development/study groups
- Encourage faculty of same/similar courses to meet with each other weekly
- Host faculty retreats to focus on professional development on equity issues
Implications for Further Research

This dissertation study has provided many avenues for future research. Table 9.5 showcases a potential agenda that capitalizes on this research and suggests possible topics of study to move this work forward.

Table 9.5. Avenues for future research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Topic of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-studies</td>
<td>Engage students in self-study methodology to support their learning about Whiteness/Racism and awareness of the need for equity pedagogies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Examine student’s resistance or willingness to engage in critical multicultural teacher education and Whiteness studies and explore reasons for resistance and/or willingness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Analysis</td>
<td>Historical influence of Whiteness-constructions of identities in immigrant families (particularly my own).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deconstructive Analysis</td>
<td>Whiteness in self, others, society, systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Study of Whiteness and Whiteness socialization of my own child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoethnography</td>
<td>Study of self in reclaiming a new racial identity, points of conflict with other aspects of Whiteness (like suspected in parenting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative self-studies or life histories</td>
<td>Analysis of identities (teacher educator and students) and understandings of socialized racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative analysis</td>
<td>Follow-up study with participants of this study, new study with new participants, and/or restructured curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studies about Whiteness, family history, and racial socialization. I did not expect to gain so many insights on socialized racism embedded in constructions of Whiteness when I began this study. I learned how pervasive Whiteness is within my family’s history, my family’s cultural identities, and in every aspect of my identity and I
learned how pervasive Whiteness is in the lives and histories of the preservice teachers who participated in the study. Because the teaching population in the U.S. is predominantly White, this warrants further research that engages educators in investigating the historical influence of Whiteness with regard to constructions of identities in immigrant families, particularly European-American families.

In my own work, I am interested in tracing the influence of Whiteness back as far as I can gather data. I am interested in peeling away layers of Whiteness in my history and the history of others through a deconstructive analysis of it as well. Since I have become more aware of how situated I am in Whiteness, a significant study might involve using ethnographic methodology to explore ways I have socialized and continue to socialize my child to be White and then exploring the ways to negotiate Whiteness socialization through parenting: What might that look like? How would I alternatively socialize my child? What issues would need to be addressed? How might that socialization focus on raising a daughter to counter issues of inequity?

My ethnic and racial identity certainly warrants further study - study of self and history as I deconstruct Whiteness within an examination of the history of my positionality. As I deepen my autoethnographic work, it will be important for me to engage in deeper explorations of national, international, historical, and political contexts in which my family and other Italian Americans constructed themselves as White. This could lead into another autoethnographic study that would help me gain a more complex understanding of my identity and what that means in my role as parent, as teacher educator, and potential change agent as a member of an inequitable society. As Guglielmo and Salerno (2003) write, it is time for me to figure out where I fit in the
history of race in America by interrogating and critically examining how Italians developed an awareness of the color line and “made race in America” (p. 3).

The pervasiveness of Whiteness in my own life parallels that of the preservice teachers of this study. These findings reflect a need for a future collaborative study with students in which we examine our own processes in discussions of socialized racism and our interpretations of them. I also think that a closer analysis of undergraduate students’ socialized identities presented within their narrative reflections can provide great insight into supporting them in committing to social justice work. Since I conducted this study with undergraduate students, I think it would be insightful to follow up with them and collect data to explore their dispositions after their Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ experience. I wonder if they have maintained or continued to develop dispositions to recognize racism and discrimination, acquire a critical stance on education, and identify and eliminate deficit views of children and families of Color or from diverse backgrounds. It would be important to follow them through their coursework as they continue in the teacher education program identifying where the ideas explored in EDTE 400 were built upon and enhanced, where they were non-existent, and where they may be contradicted. Similarly, it would be revealing to follow students through graduation and into their first teaching jobs, studying the influence of their professional development experiences in terms of consistency with the ideas presented in EDTE 400.

Finally, as I plan to add elements of critical pedagogy, Whiteness theory, and self-reflective narrative assignments to this course in the future, a new study could be a comparative analysis of students’ responses, dispositions, and learning in the newly restructured course compared to how the course has been structured.
Conclusion

I opened this study with a vignette about the inspiration for the original *Freedom Readers* literacy program – Frederick Douglass’ (2003) quote, “*Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.*” This dissertation study was built on the notion that “being forever free” is not negotiated merely by learning to read, and that instead, obstacles to opportunity and freedom include the very real barriers of institutional and individual racism, oppression, and disprivilege. Much of this study demonstrated that those barriers include the *chains* that *imprison* us in the world of Whiteness. I believe that literacy engagements between preservice teachers and children from diverse communities, guided by a framework of critical theory, Whiteness theory, critical race theory, equity pedagogies, and social justice, can lead to pathways that allow prospective teachers to access socially conscious strategies for recognizing and changing an unjust society (Bull, 2008; DuBois, 1994; Kincheloe, 2010). This type of educational consciousness can become “the practice of freedom . . . the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Shaul in Freire, 1970, p. 34).

*Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* attempted to foster a kind of freedom that can come about when teacher educators seek to broaden world views of preservice teachers through a critical lens and socially conscious strategies, in this case, as literacy partners learning to challenge deficit views of children and families from worlds beyond their own. Preservice teachers within this study did challenge deficit views, some more than others, and were able to promote positive views of children’s identities, knowledge, and capabilities. I realize that preservice teachers left the experience still very unaware of the
inequities in literacy education and in society, and this remains problematic as we continue to serve children of Color and children from low-income communities less well than we serve middle class White students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 1999). However, this study represents a starting point for young people who are new to the field of education, many of whom may never have had opportunities to consider educational inequities and the importance of knowing and valuing children and their families beyond schools as they learn about supporting children as literate beings. It was an experience that I hope is accompanied by future education classes and professional development experiences that continue to broaden students’ awareness and perspectives and provide strategies for taking action to change educational inequities that continue to be so pervasive in society and in schooling.

I believe that stories shared, created, collaborated, or deconstructed help us understand who we are and how best to navigate the world (Reissman, 2008), that stories also enable us to learn about the identities and experiences of others, and that stories hold great potential for helping us consider or include them in the decisions we make every day to recognize injustices and work to change them in our personal, academic and/or professional lives. Findings from this study demonstrate that there are great truths in this belief. I have gained a better understanding of who I am as an individual, teacher educator, and researcher. Preservice teachers in this study also claimed to gain a better understanding of themselves and others. Our steps mark the first steps on pathways toward acknowledging how we have been socialized to play a role in the perpetuation of injustices of others. Our steps will hopefully continue toward greater awareness of inequities in society and schools and the need for equity pedagogies for all children.
REFERENCES


Howard, G.R. (1999). *We can’t teach what we don’t know.* New York: Teacher’s College Press.


409


Long, S., Volk, D., Tisdale, C., & Baines, J. (2013). We’ve been doing it your way long enough: Syncretism as critical process. *Journal of Early Childhood Literature*. 0(0), 1-22. Retrieved from ecl.sagepub.com


Reyes, M., de la Luz (Ed.). (2011). *Words were all we had: Becoming biliterate against the odds*. New York: Teachers College Press.


APPENDIX A
Freedom Readers Literacy Partners at Ivy Village Apartments

*Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners* acknowledges and values literacy as lived experiences embedded in the understandings of identity and life experiences, language, history, society, and culture of persons. *Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners* believes that individuals who participate in personalized engagements in support of literacy and learning with others can become literacy partners able to form valuable literacy partnerships that contribute to all participants’ life successes.

**Our Vision**
*Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners* connects pre-service teachers with children and their families in families’ communities to support the literacy of all learners and to help contribute to all participants’ success in achieving academic, professional, and personal life goals.

**Our Mission**
The mission of *Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners* at IVA is to help form literacy partnerships between USC education candidates and young scholars of Irmo Village. These partnerships are aimed to support all participants’ literacy and learning by providing a friendly and fun learning environment for literacy engagements, personalized literacy support and learning, and free books to expand home libraries.

**Literacy Goals for Literacy Partners:**
- To form authentic and valuable literacy partnerships
- To gain better understandings of literacy and its power for all persons
- To identify and value the multiple literacies that all participants bring with them to the partnerships
- To learn about self and others through literacy engagements
- To support the love of reading
- To better understand the power of words in reading, writing, and public speaking
- To better understand and support various literacy processes
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners
at
Ivy Village Apartments

Program Coordinator: Lisa I. Reid
Contact Information: ianni@email.sc.edu or lisaanni@hotmail.com
(Mobile) 843-333-4838

Meeting Dates:

1. Tuesday, February 7th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
2. Tuesday, February 14th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
3. Tuesday, February 21st 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
4. Tuesday, February 28th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
5. Tuesday, March 13th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
6. Tuesday, March 20th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
7. Tuesday, March 27th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
8. Tuesday, April 3rd 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
9. Tuesday, April 10th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
10. Tuesday, April 17th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
11. Tuesday, April 25th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Session Agenda for each Week:

• Whole Group Literacy Activity ~ 4:00 pm - 4:15 pm
  o Read Aloud
  o Celebrations
  o Community Building
  o Writing Activity
  o Word Focus

• One-on-One/Small Group Literacy engagements ~ 4:15 pm – 4:45 pm
  o Young scholar selects a book
    ▪ Support for selecting appropriate books
    ▪ Discuss book interests
  o Literacy partners engage in reading to and with each other
    ▪ Support and guide reading
    ▪ Focus on defining and understanding new vocabulary
    ▪ Discuss elements of the book for comprehension and further connection
  o Literacy partners create a response to the book (for example, in regard to a character, topic, theme, place, etc...)
    ▪ Writing a letter to a character
    ▪ Drawing a representation of an aspect of the book
    ▪ Creating a dictionary with new words learned from reading
    ▪ Writing a personalized book
• Literacy shares or Mini-speeches ~ **4:45 pm - 5:00 pm**
  - Young scholar give one minute speeches about identity, family, community, interests
  - Partners share book response creations or writing

**What Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners Will Provide:**

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a weekly sixty minute session for registered children per class at Ivy Village Apartments on Tuesdays.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will assign one USC pre-service teacher to work with young scholars who participate in the program either in one-on-one or small group partnerships. Each young scholar will be allowed to choose one book to take home at the end of each meeting.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a light nutritional snack at each weekly meeting. Parents can indicate if their children have any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a trained group leader to begin each session with a Read Aloud, community building activity, or inspiring literacy engagement.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide age appropriate books for young scholars and support them in choosing books each week.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide rules and guidelines to both parents and children to help assure the safety and well being of the children who participate in the program.

**Rules:**
1. Children in grades K-6 are invited to attend the program. (Children should be able to listen to an adult read and follow instructions.)

2. Parents must register their young scholar(s) on or before the registration deadline prior to the session they would like to have their children attend.

3. Every young scholar is encouraged to participate consistently each week.

4. Young scholars are not allowed to bring guest(s) to the weekly meetings unless special permission is granted by the director in writing one week in advance. However, parents are always welcome.
5. The young scholars should arrive at each meeting by 4:00 pm. The parent or guardian is strongly encouraged to come into the community center to check their young scholar(s) in. Parents or guardians are invited to join literacy partnerships with young scholars.

6. Parents should contact Ms. Bea if their child/children are unable to attend the week’s session.

7. Children who participate in the program will be expected to follow the leaders’ instructions and participate in all activities.

8. Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners reserves the right not to permit a child to attend the program who refuses to follow instructions and participate in activities.

9. Parents of young scholars should read to or with their child at least 30 minutes each day. Listening to the young scholar read books received from Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners is essential for your child and will help support literacy partnerships.

**Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners Agreement**

Parent’s Name____________________________________________

Phone # __________________________________

Child’s Name  Grade level next yr.  Age
1.____________________________  ___________   ________
2.____________________________  ___________   ________
3.____________________________  ___________   ________
4.____________________________  ___________   ________
5.____________________________  ___________   ________

Please Indicate Any Food Allergies or any other important information:

________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Guidance

Study Title: Community-Based, Literacy Partnerships and Culturally Responsive Teachers

Researcher: Lisa Ianni Reid

Introduction and Purpose of the Study: I am conducting this study as part of the requirements for my doctoral degree in Language and Literacy. The purpose of the study is to explore the observations, reflections, and interpretations of undergraduate students majoring in Education at The University of South Carolina (Columbia) who are engaged in Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners (fieldwork) at Ivy Village Apartments, as part of an academic course requirement, to better understand how to restructure teacher education courses and programs for educating culturally responsive teachers.

Study tasks and procedures: As part of the regular course requirements, you will be required to write field notes and reflections of your service (field work) experiences. If you agree to participate in this study, I will collect copies of your field notes and reflections and analyze them for this study. Additionally, as part of the study you will be asked to participate in two interviews and two group discussions. The interviews and group discussions will be scheduled at a time and location convenient to participants. Topics discussed will pertain to your experiences as literacy partners at Ivy Village Apartments. Interviews and focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis of this study.

Duration of subject’s participation and study withdrawal: The expected duration of your participation in this study spans 14 weeks. You may choose to discontinue participation in this study without penalty or prejudice. If you choose to withdraw, data from your field notes, reflections and writings, and audio-recordings will be eliminated from the study.

Description of risks and benefits: The likelihood of risks is minimal. Despite the steps taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality, a slight risk remains that a breach in confidentiality could occur. You may benefit from participating in the study as you may improve skills or learn skills for conducting your own research.
Confidentiality of subject records: Confidentiality of all students participating in this study will be preserved as names will be given pseudonyms within the study analysis, write up for publication, and research presentation. The data gathered during the study will be kept in a secure location and will only be available to members of the research team. Although I will ask that all members of the group discussion respect the privacy of other members of the group, I cannot promise that members will not disclose what is discussed.

Incentives provided to students: You will receive course credit for participating in components of this study. You are required to serve 20 hours in a site. Participation in the interviews and group discussion will account for hours not met within service.

Subject rights: You do not give up any personal rights by consenting to participate. Participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions: Please contact Lisa Ianni Reid (Principal Investigator) for questions, concerns, or complaints at ianni@email.sc.edu.

Certificate of Consent

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate as a participant in this research.

Print Name of Participant________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant _________________________________________________________

Date ___________________________  Day/month/year  

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent___________________________________________

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent___________________________________________

Date ___________________________  Day/month/year  

423
I. Descriptive Information

A. Course number and title: EDTE 400 – Learning through Community Service
B. Catalogue description: Documentation and synthesis of community service activities designed to prepare professional educators.
C. Course credit: One undergraduate hour
D. Course open to students preparing to enter teacher education programs and other students seeking a basic understanding of American education.

E. Instructor: Lisa I. Reid
   Wardlaw Room 107F
   Email: ianni@email.sc.edu

F. Site Coordinator: Dr. Rose Ann Khoury
   Wardlaw Room 107
   Voice: 803.777.9696
   Email: rakhoury2001@yahoo.com
   khouryr@mailbox.sc.edu

II. Statement of Course Goals and Objectives

A. Goals: This course is designed to assist students in learning the basic components and methodology of service learning, engage in service learning within the community, and reflect on personal experience of learning in the context of community service.

B. Objectives: The student as professional development educator will:
   1. synthesize observations of the educational process in a community setting
2. examine the relationship between identity, learning, and teaching within service/community-based work roles
3. develop a personal perspective on education and the commitment to service as an educator
4. report critically on the learning experience through service

III. Required Texts: All materials posted in Blackboard

IV. Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation and Assignments**: Students are expected to participate in every class and Blackboard discussion and to complete assigned readings and other class activities as required.

2. **Community Service Hours/Time Sheets**: Students are required to complete twenty (20) hours of community service.

3. **Written Assignment**: Students are required to write a critical narrative exploring personal identities formed through socialization.

4. **Service Learning Blog**: Students are required to write about service learning experiences at various stages (Guidelines on Blackboard).

5. **Service Learning Share**: Students will share stories of their service learning experiences and lead peers in discussions (Guidelines on Blackboard).

6. **Course Evaluation**: Evaluate the course online: [http://www.ed.sc.edu/CourseEval](http://www.ed.sc.edu/CourseEval)

---

**IV. COURSE SCHEDULE**

1/10

*Introductions and Expectations: Course Overview*

- **Meet on campus**
- What is Service Learning?
- Discuss role within Service Learning
  - **Student Information Form due in class 1/17**
  - **Wiki introduction posted in Blackboard by 1/17**
  - **Read Harro’s Chapter on Socialization/Social Identities (Posted in Bb) before 1/17**

---

1/17

*Review Service Learning Blog and Assignments (Role within SL)*
***Meet on campus

Discussion of Socialization/Hegemony & Importance in SL/Education
View Chimamanda Adichie: “The danger of a single story”
Discuss Identity Narrative Assignment

Between 1/18 and 2/6

NO CLASSES on CAMPUS

Please work on the following assignments during this time:

*** Blackboard

Why does Identity Matter?

- Complete Critical Identity Narrative and email to ianni@email.sc.edu by 1/31

- Complete Discussion Board Thread (post under forum entitled “danger of a single story” in Bb) by 2/7
  Complete Part I of SL Blog and post (in a thread under SL Part I Forum in Blackboard) by 2/7
- Read “Identity Matters” by McCarthey, S. and Moje, E.B. (Posted in Bb) by 2/7

- Serve hours in your site
- Continue to work on Service Learning Blog

2/7

***Meet on campus

Discuss service site experiences/ issues
Review assignments
Discuss Counter-narratives
Discuss Service Learning Shares

Between 2/8 & 3/12

NO CLASSES on CAMPUS

- Serve hours
- Continue working on your BLOG

How do we construct counter-narratives?

- Read “Five steps in constructing a counter-narratives of young children and their families” by López-Robertson, Long, & Tuner-Nash (posted on Bb) before 3/13
3/13

***Meet on campus

Discuss Service Site Experiences/Issues
Discuss Counter-Narratives in relation to identity and SL
Review Service Learning Share Assignment

Between 3/14 & 4/16

NO CLASSES on CAMPUS
- Serve hours
- Continue working on your BLOG
- Prepare for SL Share/Discussion

4/17

Service Learning Shares/Discussions

***Meet on campus

- Time Sheets and Evaluations Due 4/24 in Dr. Khoury’s box

4/24

Service Learning Shares/Discussions

***Meet on campus

- Complete Online Course Evaluations
- Completed Blogs by 4/27 (Posted within Blog Tool in Blackboard)
APPENDIX D

Critical Identity Narrative

Guidelines:
- Your essay must adhere to the following guidelines: at least two full pages (no more than four pages), typed, 12pt font size, Times New Roman font, Black type, double spaced, including a heading
- Read the rubric and use it as a guide when writing your essay to be sure that you meet all of the requirements for this assignment.

Essay:

I. Write a narrative about your identity.

   a. In your narrative identify the social identities that make up your Identity. Choose to identify and describe at least five of the following:
      i. gender
      ii. race
      iii. age
      iv. sexual orientation
      v. religion
      vi. economic class
      vii. ability/disability status.

   b. For each social identity, write about how you have been socialized or what you have learned in order to be each (of the five you choose) social identity (refer to Harro’s article or class discussion notes to refresh your memory about socialization and social identities).

   c. Then choose two social identities and explain how those identities predispose you to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression, whether in being a target AND in being an agent contributing to the oppression of others.

   **BE VERY SPECIFIC** in describing your social identities and in addressing all aspects of the prompt: a, b, and c.
APPENDIX E
Service Learning Blog

SERVICE LEARNING BLOG: Create your own service learning blog in a Word document. You will need to cut/paste the contents of it to our Blackboard’s Blog Tool (Go to Tools and then to Blog Tool)

1. Your blog entries must address each question at the appropriate time before, during, and after service hours.
2. **Each bulleted entry must consist of at least 150 words.** YOUR BLOG MUST INCLUDE A TOTAL OF 10 ENTRIES.
3. Your Blog will be graded on the following:
   a. **Rubric:** Each entry is worth 10 points for a total of 100 points. Each entry will be graded on meeting all the requirements: consisting of at least 150 words, answering every question within the prompts, and including authentic reflections and specific details. 10 points will be deducted if your blog is not posted in Blackboard’s blog tool.

**Part I: Before Service Blogging Entries:**

**Goal Setting and Expectations (Entries for the following questions must be completed before you start serving at your site)**

- What are your initial thoughts about engaging in service learning?
- How do you feel about your position within this experience, or rather, how do you think you might be viewed upon entering into this experience? Does this affect your initial thoughts of service learning?

**Part II: During Service Blogging Entries:**

**Role: Student as Researcher/Learner**

You will write one field note entry and a reflection entry reflecting on your observation at the beginning, middle, and end of your service experiences. Every time you choose to write a field note entry, you must then reflect on your field notes in a reflection entry. Therefore, you will complete two entries each time (beginning, middle, and near the end)

**Field notes: (Field notes should be taken during service or immediately after service)**

- (1) Write one field note entry towards the beginning of your service. Record specific details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.
- (2) Write one field note entry in the mid-point of your service. Record specific
details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.

- (3) Write one field note entry near the end of your service. Record specific details about what occurred in relation to activities, interactions, or conversations.

**Reflections:** *(Reflection entries must be completed after each field note entry)*

Read through your field notes and reflect on your experiences within your service site.

- (1) Write one reflection towards the beginning of your service reflecting on your observations recorded within your first field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What were you thinking as you interacted or observed within the service session?
- (2) Write one reflection reflecting on your observations recorded within your second field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What are you learning about students’ identities, interests, strengths, and motivations?
- (3) Write one reflection reflecting on your observations recorded within your third field note entry. Include a reflection on the following: What have you learned about within your experience in regard to any of the following – socialization or social interactions, teaching practices, learning and identity?

**Part III:** Post Service Blogging Entries:

**Post-Service Experience Reflections** *(Complete these entries after you have completed your 20 hours of service)*

- What are some of the highlights / memorable moments of your experiences?
- How did this service learning experience change the way you think about yourself as a person/educator and the students you might teach?
APPENDIX F
Service Learning Share

Service Learning Share: You will present your service learning experience by informally sharing stories and insights gained from your experience. You will create a counter narrative of the individual(s) with whom you worked through what you share.

- You will need to address the following prompts and questions. Think of narrating a story of your experience to encompass all of these points.
- You will also need to type up a hard copy in which you address each prompt and question. This will be turned in the day you present. It is also a good way to prepare.
- You will have 5 minutes to share in class.

Address all of the following prompts and questions as you share:
1. Briefly describe your service learning site (place/setting, demographics, individuals with whom you interacted, and service responsibilities/tasks).
2. What biases were revealed to you through your reflections and writing on identity, socialization, positionality or any other aspect of this class? In other words, what biases do you think you have of others or of particular issues based on who you are and how you have been socialized?
3. How did this affect your service learning experience and your thinking throughout it (about yourself, your role in service learning, your thoughts on education, your role as a future educator, etc.)?
4. What assumptions or stereotypes did you have of the people and/or children of your site before or in the beginning of your experience?
5. What assumptions and/or stereotypes did you hear from others (possibly people within your site) that negatively defined and labeled children (others)?

Constructing Counter-Narratives (most of your share should address this portion)
6. How did you get to know the children and/or people? Or how did you develop relationships within your site to get to know the individuals with whom you interacted?
7. What did you learn about their identities (their joys, interests, goals/dreams, sources of pride, knowledge, family, language, or literacies)?
8. How did (or how can) what you learn reverse deficit perspectives of children?
9. What insights (no more than 3) gained throughout this experience inform your thinking about your future life purpose and career?
10. What are you still thinking about even after your experience and reflections?
Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “diversity” in the context of education?
2. What is your definition of culture?
3. What is your culture? Share some information of your culture.
4. How important do you think culture and diversity are when you prepare to teach or in your future role as an educator?
5. How important do you think it is to consider culture and diversity in education when you teach?
6. Were you prepared to discuss issues of socialization, social identities, oppression, race, class, culture, and identity in EDTE 400, Learning through Community Service, so were you prepared to talk about those issues? Explain why you were or were not.
7. Which issue do you feel is/was most difficult to discuss and why?
8. What have been your experiences with people from racial and ethnic groups different from your own?
9. Did you know prior to participation in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners that you would be partnering with Black children from low income housing, and what assumptions did you develop prior to participation about the children and families you would encounter?
10. What assumptions did you have about your role as a literacy partner, my role as site leader, or anyone else’s role in the program?
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners at Ivy Village Apartments

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners acknowledges and values literacy as lived experiences embedded in the understandings of identity and life experiences, language, history, society, and culture of persons. Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners believes that individuals who participate in personalized engagements in support of literacy and learning with others can become literacy partners able to form valuable literacy partnerships that contribute to all participants’ life successes.

Our Vision
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners connects pre-service teachers with children and their families in families’ communities to support the literacy of all learners and to help contribute to all participants’ success in achieving academic, professional, and personal life goals.

Our Mission
The mission of Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners at Ivy Village Apartments is to help form literacy partnerships between USC pre-service teachers and young scholars of Ivy Village to support all participants’ literacy and learning by providing a friendly and fun learning environment for literacy engagements, personalized literacy support and learning, and free books to expand home libraries.

Literacy Goals for Literacy Partners:
- To form authentic and valuable literacy partnerships
- To gain better understandings of literacy and its power for all persons
• To identify and value the multiple literacies that all participants bring with them to the partnerships
• To learn about self and others through literacy engagements
• To support the love of reading
• To better understand the power of words in reading, writing, and public speaking
• To better understand and support various literacy processes
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners
at
Ivy Village Apartments

Program Coordinator: Lisa I. Reid
Contact Information: ianni@email.sc.edu or lisaanni@hotmail.com
(Mobile) 843-333-4838

Meeting Dates:

1. Tuesday, February 1st 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
2. Tuesday, February 8th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
3. Tuesday, February 15th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
4. Tuesday, February 21st 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
5. Tuesday, March 1st 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
6. Tuesday, March 15th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
7. Tuesday, March 22nd 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
8. Tuesday, March 29th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
9. Tuesday, April 5th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
10. Tuesday, April 12th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
11. Tuesday, April 19th 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Session Agenda for each Week:

- Whole Group Literacy Activity ~ 4:00 pm - 4:15 pm
  - Read Aloud
  - Celebrations
  - Community Building
  - Writing Activity
  - Word Focus

- One-on-One/Small Group Literacy engagements ~ 4:15 pm - 4:45 pm
  - Young scholar selects a book
    - Support for selecting appropriate books
    - Discuss book interests
  - Literacy partners engage in reading to and with each other
- Support and guide reading
- Focus on defining and understanding new vocabulary
- Discuss elements of the book for comprehension and further connection
  - Literacy partners create a response to the book (for example, in regard to a character, topic, theme, place, etc...)
    - Writing a letter to a character
    - Drawing a representation of an aspect of the book
    - Creating a dictionary with new words learned from reading
    - Writing a personalized book

- Literacy shares or Mini-speeches ~ 4:45 pm - 5:00 pm
  - Young scholar give one minute speeches about identity, family, community, interests
  - Partners share book response creations

**What Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners Will Provide:**

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a weekly sixty minute session for no more than 12 registered children per class at Irmo Village Apartments on Tuesdays.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will assign one USC pre-service teacher to work with young scholars who participate in the program either in one-on-one or small group partnerships. Each young scholar will be allowed to choose one book to take home at the end of each meeting.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a light nutritional snack at each weekly meeting. Parents can indicate if their children have any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide a trained group leader to begin each session with a Read Aloud, community building activity, or inspiring literacy engagement. Generally, this sharing will be led by Lisa Reid.

Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide age appropriate books for young scholars and support them in choosing books each week.
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners will provide rules and guidelines to both parents and children to help assure the safety and well being of the children who participate in the program.

Rules:
1. Children in grades K-6 are invited to attend the program. (Children should be able to listen to an adult read and follow instructions.)

2. Parents must register their young scholar(s) on or before the registration deadline prior to the session they would like to have their children attend.

3. Every young scholar is expected encouraged to participate consistently each week. We have parents that work and are in school, depending where their kid needs to be, they may not be able to participate on that day of a particular week.

4. Young scholars are not allowed to bring guest(s) to the weekly meetings unless special permission is granted by the director in writing one week in advance. However, parents are always welcome.

5. The young scholars must arrive at each meeting by 4:00 pm. Doors will be locked at 4:15 and no young scholar will be allowed to enter the building after this time. Unless prior arrangements have been made with Ms. Bea. Again, we are allotting time for parents to get home from work or school. The parent or guardian is strongly encouraged to come into the community center to check their young scholar(s) in. Parents or guardians are invited to join literacy partnerships with young scholars.

6. If the young scholar(s) is walking or biking from home to the Community Center or if the parent or guardian is not able to check the young scholar(s) in, in person, the parent or guardian must notify Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners to indicate how the young scholar will be arriving, when the young scholar will be arriving, and who will be dropping the young scholar(s) off. If the young scholar does not arrive at the time or in the way the parent or guardian specifies the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately. Children are required to attend every day, and parents are required to contact Freedom Readers” Literacy Partners ahead of time if an absence is
anticipated. If an emergency should arise, call Ms. Bea or Lisa Reid or send a note with the young scholar to the next meeting. Because this is an event done on IVA property thru the RSC’s office I would be the liaison for this event, therefore parents would need to contact me only, because I am responsible party on the property; then I would communicate information to you. We also have children that parents are working and I am responsible for them coming and making sure they return home.

7. Parents and guardians must pick up their child(ren) at 5:00 pm. If a parent or guardian does not pick up their young scholar(s) by 5:00 pm the young scholar(s)’s parents or guardian will be contacted immediately. Our children are allowed to walk home by themselves because of the way our community is design. And those who need assistance getting home would be my responsibility (which has already been established before signing up).

8. The program leaders will only allow children to go home with those people who are listed to do so on the registration form. Parents or guardians may add people to this list at any time. This will also fall in line with #6 & #7. And I am aware of all the children and parents.

9. Young Scholar whose parents made arrangements with Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners to have their young scholar(s) walk or bike to the program, must remain at the center until 5:00 pm. If the young scholar leaves before 5:00 pm, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately and the young scholar(s) will be asked not to attend for one month. Our children are not allowed to leave any of our programs before time unless a parent is present or that parent has notified me in advance.

10. Once the young scholars leave they are not permitted to return again that day. This is not a necessary statement.

11. Once the young scholars leave the community center premises, Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners is not responsible for their safe return home. This is not a necessary statement, because we (IVA) are not holding Freedom Readers responsible for the students. While in the community the children are IVA’s responsibility.
12. Children who participate in the program will be expected to follow the leaders’ instructions and participate in all activities.

13. Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners reserves the right not to permit a child to attend the program who refuses to follow instructions and participate in activities.

14. Parents of young scholars should read to or with their child at least 30 minutes each day. Listening to the young scholar read books received from Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners is essential for your child and will help support literacy partnerships.
Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners Agreement

Parent’s Name ________________________________________________________________

Phone # ________________________________________________________________

Child’s Name                                     Grade level next yr.  Age
1._________________________________________      ___________      ________
2._________________________________________      ___________      ________
3._________________________________________      ___________      ________
4._________________________________________      ___________      ________
5._________________________________________      ___________      ________

Please Indicate Any Food Allergies
__________________________________________________________________________

Please list the people who have permission to pick up your child(ren). Please include yourself.

Name  Not necessary, our children are permitted to return home by themselves.

1.________________________________________________________
2.________________________________________________________
3.________________________________________________________
Other Information

Name & Driver’s License Number: Not necessary, again children are able to return home by themselves.

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________

In general if you will not be dropping off your child(ren) please indicate how they will be arriving, when they will be arriving, and who will be dropping them off using the space below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

By registering your child(ren) for Freedom Reader: Literacy Partners it will be assumed they will be attending every Tuesday from 4:00 to 5:00 pm and will be picked up at 5:00 pm. In general if there is a day during the session that your child(ren) will not be attending or need to leave before 4:30 pm please indicate your wishes using the space below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
I have read, understand and agree to the rules and procedures set up by Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners program and have explained these rules to the children under my care who will be participating in the program. I agree to have my children participate in Freedom Readers: Literacy Partners Program at Irmo Village according to the rules set forth.

___________________________________________
Print Name

___________________________________________
Signature                                      Date
### Bingo Activity

Getting to know each other  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has the same birth month as you</th>
<th>Likes one of the same songs that you like</th>
<th>Has read the same book as you</th>
<th>Can do something you can do</th>
<th>Likes one of the same foods you like to eat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the same number of siblings as you</td>
<td>Favorite color is the same as yours</td>
<td>Has been to the same restaurant as you</td>
<td>Likes the same Disney character as you</td>
<td>Favorite holiday is the same as yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite meal of the day is the same as yours</td>
<td>Has played the same PS3, Nintendo, or Xbox game</td>
<td>Favorite day of the week is the same as yours</td>
<td>Has seen a movie you have seen</td>
<td>Likes the same flavor ice cream as you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has been somewhere you have been</td>
<td>Has on the same color shirt as you</td>
<td>Favorite season is the same as yours</td>
<td>Has played the same sport or game as you</td>
<td>Favorite time of the day is the same as yours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose a person you do not know. List as many things you can with them about what you both have in common.
I. Partner Book (20-30 minutes, end by 4:30)
   1. You and your partner will create a book out of one piece of construction paper.
      a. Fold it in half. Have them create one side representing himself/herself and you create the other side representing yourself. Help your partner if he or she needs help with writing, drawing, cutting, etc.
   2. First have a conversation with your partner to discuss these things. Represent the following points through writing and visual representations on each appropriate side of your book.
      • Draw yourself.
      • Where were you born? Write the city and state. Then, draw a symbol unique to the place where you were born.
      • Draw your family. Tell me about one member of your family. Write one sentence about one member of your family and draw an arrow to your visual of that family member.
      • Write down or visually represent three of your favorite things?
      • Write down your favorite subject in school?
      • Write one to three sentences describing one dream or goal you have in life?
      • Decorate your page

I. Finding a Book and Shared Reading (20 minutes)
   a. Explore the books. Help your partner find a book. You should each choose the same book.
b. Sit down with them and begin shared reading. USC partner, you can read first. Take turns reading. Help your partner if he or she is experiencing difficulty or hesitation with words while reading.

c. Stop and talk about the book at appropriate times. Some things you might want to ask:

i. What is going on in the book. Have you ever experiences that? Can you relate?

ii. Ask them if they have anything in common with the character.

iii. Ask them if they have ever experienced something going on in the book

Basically, HAVE CONVERSATION about the BOOK.

II. Partner Book Share

a. You will stand up with your partner and share each other's side. You will share his or her side and they will share yours. Encourage or help help if he or she is unsure or shy.
I. Partner Book Share (20 min., 4:20)
   a. You will stand up with your partner and share each other’s side of the partner book. You will share his or her side and they will share yours. Encourage or help help if he or she is unsure or shy. You can opt to have the younger ones share their side (easier).

II. Finding a Book and Shared Reading (20 minutes)
   a. Explore the books. Help your partner find a book. You should each choose the same book.
   b. Sit down with them and begin shared reading. USC partner, you can read first. Take turns reading. Help your partner if he or she is experiencing difficulty or hesitation with words while reading.
   c. Stop and talk about the book at appropriate times. Some things you might want to ask:
      i. What is going on in the book. Have you ever experiences that? Can you relate?
      ii. Ask them if they have anything in common with the character.
      iii. Ask them if they have ever experienced something going on in the book
          Basically, HAVE CONVERSATION about the BOOK.

III. Making a Haiku
a. What is a haiku? The haiku originated in Japan and is a verse (poem) written in three lines. The haiku does not rhyme. Instead, the haiku sets a mood or portrays a feeling or scenery.

b. The entire haiku is composed in 17 syllables. The first line contains five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third and final line has five syllables. 5-7-5

I don’t know whether
He loves me, he loves me not;
The daisy decides.

Shimmer and glimmer
Stars that make your eyes shine bright...
Because you love me.
APPENDIX L
EDTE 400 List of Practicum Sites

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDTE 400   LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE

LIST OF PRACTICUM SITES

Spring Semester 2013

1. Abundant Life Outreach Ministries. 1916 Middleton Street, Cayce, SC 29033.
   Volunteers will assist teachers instructing students in K-4 through Grade 4 classes.

2. ArthurTown Child Development Center, 223 Riley Street, Columbia, SC 29201.
   Assist in child care, ages six weeks to five years old, 6:30am to 6:00pm daily.

3. AVID Program, Richland School District Two, 6831 Brookfield Road, Columbia, SC 29206.
   Tutors will assist in the AVID program, a college preparatory program for the underserved “middle” student. Sites include Richland Two schools.

4. Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands, 500 Gracern Road, Columbia, SC 29210.
   After-school youth development program with at-risk and disadvantaged students, ages 6-18 years old. Club hours are M-F, 2:30pm-6:30pm. Volunteer assist with homework, tutoring and mentoring. Brief 30-minute orientation and background check are required. Great opportunity to make a local impact in an international not-for-profit movement serving 3 million at-risk youth.

5. Camden Elementary School, 1304 Lyttleton Street, Camden, SC 29020.
   Provide assistance to students in during-school classroom settings.

6. C.C. Pinckney Elementary School, Fort Jackson Schools, Fort Jackson,SC 29207.
   Serving students stationed at the Fort Jackson military base. Unlimited number of volunteers needed for during- and after-school hours.

   Volunteers needed in model instructional setting. Flexible time, M-F.
8. Chesterbrook Academy, 1050 Wildewood Center Drive, Columbia, SC 29229. Flexible daytime and evening hours. Students work with preschool and elementary grade level students.

9. Columbia Bethlehem Community Center, 2500 Elmwood Avenue, Columbia, SC 29204. Child development center, children ages 5 to 12 years old, serving residents in the Waverly-Edgewood and surrounding communities. Tutorial and Enrichment After-School Program is offered, 2:30pm to 6:00pm.

10. Columbia Jewish Day School, 5827 N. Trenholm Road, Columbia, SC 29206. Provide assistance during and after school in hands-on curriculum to students ages 2 years through grade five.


12. Communities in Schools of the Midlands, 1614-B Kara Street, Columbia, SC 29201. Local non-profit organization linking children, families and schools with community resources needed for academic and social success. SLED check and orientation required. Approximately 30 volunteers needed from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Volunteers placed as tutors and Lunch Buddies at the school site. Placement may take several weeks. Available sites include: Dent Middle; E.L. Wright Middle; Epworth Children’s Home; Olympia Learning Center; CIS at Department of Juvenile Justice.

13. Destination Imagination, c/o John P. Thomas Elementary School, 6001 Weston Avenue, Columbia, SC 29203. Non-profit corporation offering a global, youth-centered problem-solving program. Teams of students prepare for competitions in which they are faced with “challenges.” Offered only during USC Spring semester.

14. EdVenture Children’s Museum, 211 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201. Practicum students work with children as they explore the state-of-the-art facility which provides numerous hands-on activities and programs.

15. The Family Shelter, 2411 Two Notch Road, Columbia, SC 29204. Volunteers needed. After-school program to supplement the educational experience for children living in the shelter and in adjacent neighborhoods. Tutors work with preschool, elementary, middle and high school students.

16. Fast Forward Technology Program, 3223 Devine Street, Columbia, SC 29205. Assist as tutors and facilitators with students ages preschool through high school, utilizing state-of-the-art technology and software in a lab setting.
Non-profit literacy program. Volunteers (15 max) will be paired with students ages 5-13 to work on individualized reading and literacy skills in their neighborhood community center. Available during USC Spring semester only

18. George I. Pair Elementary School, 2325 Platt Springs Road, West Columbia, SC 29169.
Volunteer tutors will serve as student mentors for elementary-age children.

Opportunities to work with special needs students. Assist students in both during and after-school program in elementary school setting.

20. Harmony School, 3737 Covenant Road, Columbia, SC 29204.
Assist with children ages 2 to 5 in a Montessori-style environment.

21. Heartworks Program, Jubilee Academy, 1410 Sunnyside Drive, Columbia, SC 29204.
Inner-city Ministry site, serving approximately 20 at-risk students, from kindergarten through age 18. Volunteers serve as mentors. Service opportunities available during the school day, nights and weekends.

22. Hopewell Vision Community Development Group, 89 West Pine Street, McBee, SC 29101.
Student volunteers to provide on-line tutoring and mentoring service via SKYPE to elementary grade students. Reading and Math tutors especially needed.

23. HOPE Worldwide South Carolina, 2925 Devine Street, Columbia, SC 29205.
Children and families are served through our 21st Century Community Learning Center that provides year-round programs (afterschool and summer programs) as well as Adult Education for participating families. On weekends, Saturday Academy provides academic tutoring and mentoring for 3rd-5th grade boys and girls who average below the 25th percentile in academic standardized tests. The students receive weekly academic instruction, character lessons, cultural arts and conflict resolution skills. Our US Department of Education Mentoring Program is the only federal mentoring program awarded in the entire state! The HOPE Worldwide Mentoring Program provides one-to-one mentoring relationships for students in 4th and 5th grades.

25. Lugoff Elementary School, 994 Ridgeway Road, Lugoff, SC 29078.
Assist students in both during- and after-school elementary school programs.

26. Midlands Community Development Corporation, Dream Catcher Afterschool Program, 2430 Atlas Road, Columbia, SC 29209.
Tutors will work with students ages 5 through 18 in afterschool activities, 2:30-6:30pm daily. Dream Catcher operates in collaboration with Richland School District One.

27. Nehemiah Project, Airport High School, 1315 Boston Avenue, West Columbia, SC 29170.
The Nehemiah Project is a national pilot project, less than 5 minutes away from USC campus, impacting the lives of more than 2,500 families in Lexington County. We provide an after-school program targeting “at risk” students, Monday through Thursday, 3:45pm-5:45pm, at both Airport High School and Brookland Cayce High School. 85% are “on track” to graduate. Volunteer mentors spend one hour a week with one student. Parent organizations are Christ Central Ministries and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

28. North Middle High School, P.O. Box 370, North, SC 29112.
Volunteers will tutor students in grades 6 through 12 in various content areas. School located 45 minutes from Columbia.

29. North Spring Community Park Center, 200 Clemson Road, Columbia, SC 29206.
Volunteers assist in various after-school programs for children of all ages.

21st Century Grant Program catered to K-Grade 5 students in Lexington/Richland School District 5. Free program for students.

31. Richland County Public Library-Sandhills Branch Homework Support Center, 1 Summit Parkway, Columbia, SC 29229.
Grant-provided after-school lab for students in Grades 6 through 8. Monday 2:30-4:30pm.

32. Richland County Recreation Commission, Office of Special Programs, 5919 Shakespeare Road, Columbia, SC 29223.
Participate in one of 14 after-school programs, 2:30pm – 6:00pm, with students ages 6 to 13, in various areas of Richland County.

33. Richland Northeast High School, 7500 Brookfield Road, Columbia, SC 29223.
Serve as tutor and/or mentors with high school students in various content areas. Located in the Two-Notch Road area of Columbia. Limited placements available.
34. Richland Two School District “Future Visions” Student/Parent Workshop, 7500 Brookfield Road, Columbia, SC 29206.
Volunteers needed to assist with one-day workshop on Saturday, February 9, 2013.
Workshop held at Richland Northeast High School. Workshop hours: 8:30am to 1:00pm.

35. Ridge View High School, Blazer Academy, 4801 Hardscrabble Road, Columbia, SC 29223.
Volunteers and mentors needed for at-risk students in Grade 9.

36. Rolling Readers of the Midlands, P.O. Box 4599, West Columbia, SC 29171.
Community service organization of Volunteers of American Carolinas, serving over 50 sites in Richland and Lexington counties, including Title I schools, shelters, child care centers and after-school programs. Serves students in pre-K through Grade 5 classes. Volunteers read aloud to and/or tutor students in reading.

37. Saint Joseph Catholic School, 3700 Devine Street, Columbia, SC 29205.
We thoroughly enjoy having practicum students. There are many opportunities. Daytime availability, students paired with a classroom teacher, to observe, monitor student work, and teach mini-lessons. Afternoon hours available in Extended Care Program, 3:00pm to 6:00pm daily, observing children K4-grade 6, interacting, playing, completing homework. Practicum students must complete thorough background screening and attend a VIRTUS: Protecting God’s Children class.

38. Saint Lawrence Place, 2400 Waites Road, Columbia, SC 29204; Trinity Housing Corporation, 1100 Sumter Street, Columbia, SC 29201.
Volunteers to help with homework time, tutoring children, mentoring, reading, direct activities, and getting to know St. Lawrence Place and the population it serves.

Assist teachers working with elementary school students in both during and after school programs.

40. Sandhills Primary School, 140 Lewis Rast Road, Swansea, SC 29160.
Volunteers will serve in Lexington 4 school as tutors and mentors for students in Grades 1 through 4.

41. Saxe Gotha Elementary School, 100 Bill Williamson Court, Lexington, SC 29073.
Volunteers provide assistance to students in both during and after-school programs in Lexington One school setting.

42. South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, 4900 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29210.
Volunteers needed and will: 1. Work with troubled youth. 2. Mentor troubled youth. 3. Assist with youth academic and/or recreational activities.
43. South Kilbourne Elementary School, 1400 South Kilbourne Road, Columbia, SC 29205.
Volunteers provide assistance for students in both during and after-school programs in Richland One school. Richland One application and SLED check required.

44. Starbase SWAMP FOX Program, McEntire Joint National Guard Base, 1325 South Carolina Road, Stop 39, Eastover, SC 29044.
A Department of Defense Youth Program. Volunteers assist coordinators as elementary/middle school students participate in challenging, hands-on activities in science, technology, aviation, engineering, math and space exploration.

45. Tutor Eau Claire, 601 Wildwood Avenue, Columbia, SC 292023.
Tutor Eau Claire places volunteer tutors in Eau Claire neighborhood schools to work one-on-one with individual students or small groups. Also presents several after-school programs in the community. Training is provided. One-hour minimum commitment each week.

46. University of South Carolina Child Development and Research Center (USC campus child care center), 1530 Wheat Street, Columbia, SC 29208.
On-campus Child Development Center provides care for children 6 weeks to school age. Observers must have an orientation, arranged through the Center’s Graduate Assistant, a SLED background check on file, and must schedule their practicum visits. Limited openings, so it is important to plan ahead.

47. University of South Carolina, Office of Student Engagement, Russell House, Columbia, SC 29208.
Service opportunities to serve at the University of South Carolina. Many community agencies that partner with USC.

Limited number of volunteers needed. Program volunteers serve as tutors for middle and high school students at the school sites in the Columbia area, M-Th 9:30am to 1:00pm.

Limited number of volunteers needed. Upward Bound participants meet on Wednesdays and Saturdays on USC campus. Most complete an application and have a minimum 2.5 GPA. Interview required.

50. Washington Street United Methodist Church Child Development Center, 1401 Washington Street, Columbia, SC 29201.
Students assist center staff and teachers working with children ages six weeks old to five years old.
51. Waverly Community Center, Melrose Park Center, 1500 Fairview Drive, Columbia, SC 29205.
Volunteers work with elementary-age children in after-school homework and other activities. Monday-Friday 2:30pm-5:00pm.
I wrote notes and reflections in my researcher’s journal during and after each *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ sessions. The following entries reflect a glimpse of the observations and reflections throughout various stages of the program in process.

**The first day.** When I arrived at Ivy Village Apartments at 3:30 on January 31, 2012, the first session of the second year of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, USC students were already present. The chairs were set up in the community center and most of the students were already sitting and waiting for me. I went over to speak with Ms. Bea. and she put her arms out to hug me. Her manager smiled and said, “Hello.” I went out to my car to get the snacks/drinks and books and some of the Ivy Village children came running up to say hello to me. Though I spoke to various children during each session the previous year, I did not work closely with them. I purposely chose to do this so I would not interrupt USC students’ processes of building relationships with children. Nevertheless, the children remembered me and seemed ready to get the session started.

As I prepared the main table with food and drinks, a couple of USC students helped. With everyone gathered, I briefly explained a few important points for the session. I also shared the day’s agenda and passed out the BINGO sheets (Appendix I) prior to the children arriving. Five mothers arrived for the meeting. The other two mothers were unable to come. The children came in and sat on one side of the room while
the USC students sat on the other side. They all - Ivy Village children and USC students - seemed more comfortable and excited this year. Last year they seemed more uncomfortable, possibly because they did not know what to expect. I imagined that the Ivy Village children knew what they were going to experience because most of them had participated the previous year. Since the children were more relaxed and excited, the USC students seemed more relaxed and intrigued than last year’s group. I may have been more relaxed this year and that may have been communicated to them.

**January 25, 2012: Meeting the children and families.** We began asking everyone (mothers, children, me as the site coordinator, and USC students) introduce themselves. Ms. Bea and I invited the children and their mothers up to the table to get a plate of snacks and a drink. Then we invited the USC students up to do the same. While everyone ate their snacks, I briefly went through the parent packet. I spoke directly to the Ivy Village children and mothers and felt much more comfortable this second time around. The children were paying attention. I got right to the point explaining the most important details. I felt good about everything and began to trust in the process that was to unfold with *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* for the semester.

Then I explained a BINGO activity (Appendix I). The game encouraged them to find out what they had in common with each other. Last year I asked the USC students to mingle with the children and their families without an organized activity. And though it worked out in the end, it was at first awkward for the USC students. This BINGO activity was definitely an icebreaker. Ms. Bea and I were able to identify possible Ivy Village child/USC student pairs as we observed them talking and filling out the BINGO squares. If the child and a particular USC student had more than a few things in common on the
BINGO sheet, then we considered them as a possible pair. Everything went smoothly and everyone seemed engaged during this activity. A few children came up and requested specific USC students. I walked around and asked mothers to share their observations about the USC students with whom they might want their child to partner. Only one mother made a suggestion for her daughter, and Ms. Bea and I confirmed the pairing. By the end of the session, half of the children were paired with USC students. Ms. Bea and I decided to further discuss our observations and review the BINGO sheets later to determine the remaining partnerships.

Additional days. The following entries provide observations and reflections of the literacy sessions that followed the January 31st meeting with the children and the families. In these sessions, USC students are partnered with Ivy Village children, engaging in various activities.

February 7th session. I learned in the EDTE 400 class session that followed our first Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ session, that one of the Ivy Village boys (La’Roy) asked one of the USC literacy partners (Mark) to come early to the next session so they could play basketball. When I arrived at Ivy Village Apartments on February 7th, Matt was already there but sitting on a couch inside the community center. La’Roy was outside playing with his friends. The other USC students were sitting inside and had yet to set up anything. I assumed that since the introductory day went well and all tables and chairs were set up, that this day (the first actual tutoring session) would be the same. I was mistaken. Ms. Bea was preoccupied in her office with residents, so she was unable to direct the USC students to set up tables and chairs this week. I was disappointed that the students did not take the initiative to do this on their own. I started directing students to
set up tables and set up snacks and drinks, and explained that I expected them to do this each week. Ms. Bea came out of her office and asked, "How about they do the activity in here and then go outside to read?" After the room was set up, I reviewed the agenda (Appendix J) with USC students. When we were done reviewing the agenda, it was about 3:45. Some USC students remained standing there, while others sat down on the couches or chairs inside. A few students were yawning. I could clearly see the children playing outside on the basketball court or sitting at the picnic table. I remember specifically saying, "Ok. Everyone needs to go outside. Go play. You all need to wake up!" They went outside and stood there, around the picnic tables and the court. I was already annoyed with the USC students for not taking initiative to set up or interact with the children and my perception of their attitudes did not make it any better.

The Ivy Village girls, not the USC students, initiated talking to the female USC students. The Ivy Village boys invited some of the USC males to play basketball. I was relieved that the Ivy Village children took the initiative; however, I was disappointed in the USC students for needing an invitation to play or talk with these children. The previous, the USC students took the initiative and were the first to initiate conversation or interactions with children. I held similar expectations with this group of USC literacy partners would be similar. Ms. Bea also commented, “This group of USC students seems different than last year’s.” I agreed with her but also wanted to stay hopeful that things would change as sessions progressed.

When the Ivy Village children arrived, they sat with their literacy partners. I explained the agenda and welcomed everyone to come to the table and prepare a plate of snacks. The children and USC students sat together eating their snack and talking. They
then began to work on the pre-reading activity, their partner books. When it was time for literacy partners to choose books and read with the children in pairs, they all went outside to read. Some of the Ivy Village children had two USC literacy partners on this day because some of the children did not show up for the session.

USC students, Ryana and Mattie worked with five-year-old Maeva over by the play set, and Ryana seemed frustrated. When Maeva ran inside to use the restroom, I asked Ryana how it was going. She said, "She won't do anything! She won’t do anything we ask her to do!" Mattie just smiled and said, “Yeah, she’s having a hard time sitting still and paying attention.” I had noticed that Maeva was trying to play on the play set while Ryana and Mattie were trying to get her to read with them. I suggested that they sit somewhere else when Maeva returned - somewhere less distracting. I also suggested that they read aloud to her and stop periodically to ask her questions about herself and her life to try engage in conversations and try to connect her responses to the book.

I spoke to Ms. Bea about the situation, because I was interested in her perspective and insights. She told me that Maeva had not gone to preschool and this year of kindergarten was her first year of formal schooling. She also shared that Maeva’s mom wanted her to be in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* last year but that she was only four-years-old and the age requirement was five-years-old. At the end of the session, after the children left, I talked with Ryana and Mattie about Maeva. I explained that it was her first year in school and that they needed to be patient with her, while also trying to entice her with reading in any creative and fun way that they could think of during sessions. They agreed that they would.
Before I left that day, Ms. Bea and I shared our observations for the day and talked about future session plans. I had attained grant money the prior year to partially fund *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* at Ivy Village Apartments and had previously shared that with Ms. Bea. On this day, she asked me if I had any grant funds left. I told her that I did not and that I was personally funding it this year. She then said that she might be able to help out since the housing development receives additional government funds for including educational programs to support community members. I said that I appreciated the offer and to let me know what she wanted to do. She also mentioned that she needed to make sure a book goes home with a child each week because that is what she advertised to the parents. It seemed very important to her to live up to the agreements with the parents and to support the children’s literacy development. I said that I would definitely make sure that each child takes home a book and that USC partners remind and encourage them as well. When I headed out of the community center that day, I noticed that Mark’s car was still parked there. I looked over at the basketball court and was pleased to see that he was playing with three of the Ivy Village boys, La’Roy included.

**February 14th session.** When I arrived at Ivy Village Apartments with the four students who regularly rode with me, the main table was decorated by Ms. Bea with heart decorations and red and pink lollipops. It created a festive mood, and I thought it was a nice gesture. The tables and chairs had been set up by USC students and looked great. Ms. Bea told me that she would purchase the snacks each week with the additional funds she received. I thanked her and was appreciative of her willingness to provide them. Some of the Ivy Village children and the USC partners played basketball before the session began without being asked. Mark and Evan were belittling each other in the heat.
of their competition. Though Jason was Evan’s literacy partner, he hung out watching Mark and Evan play one-on-one. Jason was laughing at them and cheering Eric on while they played.

Due to personal issues, Ryana dropped EDTE 400. She did not show up for this Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ session. Mattie continued as Maeva’s literacy partner, and honestly, I was relieved. I wanted Maeva to have a positive experience with reading, and I felt that Mattie was more positive and had more patience than Ryana demonstrated. This week, partners spent half of the time on shared reading.

This was a Valentine themed session, and the agenda (Appendix K) called for literacy partners to create poetry after shared reading. Two literacy partner pairs were asked to work together, forming groups of four, to create love-themed haikus. The overall purpose was for all group members to work together to write the haiku and then compete in presenting their creative poetry in a highly expressive and animated manner. Ms. Bea and I were the judges of competition, and I had prepared bags of candy for the winners. This activity was high energy and the children were extremely engaged. It was interesting to observe the children and USC students interact during this creative composing process. The USC partners seemed entertained and surprised that the children were so into the activity. When the groups presented the haikus, everyone followed instructions and wrote excellent haikus. The presentations of them were highly creative and entertaining. There were bursts of laughter and clapping after each presentation. Everyone seemed to enjoy one of the group’s haiku presentations even more than the others. The entire group cheered when this group presented. It was obvious that they had won, and Ms. Bea and I announced them as winners. Watching the kids work excitedly with their USC partners
made me realize how important these weekly activities were. I wanted to make sure that although we were reading and supporting literacy events, *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ was not like school as most children know it. I wanted my EDTE 400 students to experience this type of educational setting. I wanted them to experience how portions of the session can be focused reading with personal conversations, while other portions could involve interactive and entertaining group activities. And that no matter what we did during the session, it involved organized, engaging, and educational activities where learning took place or literacy was supported and a sense of community was built.

**February 21st session.** Some of Ivy Village children and USC students were outside playing basketball again before the *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*’ session today. The same six USC students as the previous week were on the court. They were Hannah Ruth, Mary, Cassandra, Mark, Jason, and Evan. Two teams, mixed with USC students and Ivy Village children, formed by this session. The Ivy Village children took turns playing on the teams. Most of the children who played were males with an exception of one or two of the older females. Jason, the only other USC male, was the score keeper. Half of the other USC females stood along the court talking with each other while the other USC females sat inside on the carpet and couches waiting for the session to begin. Some of the Ivy Village girls, who were not playing basketball, sat or stood around the picnic tables talking. I sat with them and we talked and watched the game. I thought that if some of the USC females saw me interacting with the Ivy Village girls, that they would come over and join us. They did not. I started to realize that USC students may not feel very comfortable with me and that I did not know them either. I assumed our relationships would develop during sessions, but I was more focused on
working with Ms. Bea and interacting with the Ivy Village children and families than getting to know the USC students. I wondered if students’ lack of comfort with me as their instructor correlated with the degree of comfort they developed with the Ivy Village children.

The literacy partners engaged in shared reading for 30 minutes today. Then they worked on a literacy activity in which they identified reading connections between the texts and their lives. Earlier during the session, one of my USC students, Jean, shared with me that she had recently gone to visit family in New Orleans. She brought back bags full of string of beads to give to the Ivy Village children. Jean and I decided that it would be best to have the children choose a few strands of beads after they presented their text connections. When the children presented at the end of each session, their literacy partner always accompanied them to the front of the room to either present with them or stand by for support. Jean was excited to give away the beads. The children were also excited and asked her so many questions about New Orleans and about Mardi Gras saying, “thank you” and started dancing around with their beads. Because there were still many beads left, the USC students asked for a couple strands of beads to take home. Everyone was wearing beads and Ms. Bea got all of the children together for a group picture. It was a great way to end this day’s Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’ session.
I reflected more after today’s session than I had after the previous sessions. I was really concerned about the EDTE 400 students this year. Though half of them were regularly interacted with the Ivy Village children, the other half (all female) seemed uninterested. A few seemed as though they did not want to be there. I realized that on their list of community service options, several of these students had listed *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* as their second choice, yet agreed to participate when I asked them to reconsider it as their first choice. However, only two of these students appeared uninterested. The others were students who listed *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* as their first choice. Since this is a one credit class that only meets six times throughout the semester, I felt that I did not have the time to get to know students and that if I had, things might be better at Ivy Village. I think I depended on the course instruction to help students learn about the Ivy Village children, families, and community and experiences and to influence their perspectives. I think that sharing about myself in class would help them feel more comfortable with me and that they would gain further comfort seeing me with the Ivy Village children each week. I was unprepared for the frustrations that many of the female USC students (majoring in secondary education) felt working with younger children in *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. They often shared their frustrations in whole group EDTE 400 class discussions.
March 13th session. Before this session began, Evan (USC student) and Solomon (Ivy Village child) were working on Solomon’s homework at the picnic tables. Solomon apparently needed help with math and brought it for Evan to help him. I was happy to see this. The other males were outside with children before the session began, and I was pleased to see that they continually go to Ivy Village without invitation or prompting. Mark seemed to do really well with the children. I watched him as he worked with children before several of our sessions officially got started. I originally thought that he was too rough with the boys, as they often tried to wrestle with him, but the boys kept following him around and wanting to play with him. He was also the only one who talked smack when they played basketball. By this time I learned that this was just a form of sports competition talk and the boys and some of the girls liked it.

A six-year-old Ivy Village boy named Derrell, who signed up for Freedom Readers Literacy Partners last year, joined us for the first time during this session because one of the other children participating in the program moved away. Derrell was going to participate in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners for the remainder of the semester. The previous year, Ms. Bea described Derrell as “uncooperative.” I had noticed that it was often difficult to keep him interested in reading. This year, Ms. Bea and I selected Jason (White USC male), who normally worked with Evan, and Cassandra (Black female) to work with Derrell for the day. Derrell refused to work with Jason and Cassandra or even speak with them. He got up and walked away within 10 minutes of sitting with them. He then sat down with Evan and Solomon. Solomon picked up a book and started silently reading. Cassandra looked upset and confused, so I went over to
explain to her and to Jason that Derrell probably felt more comfortable reading independently and near someone he knew.

**March 20th session.** Derrell started playing with Mark before today’s session. Derrell was trying to jump up and hang onto Matt. Matt would pop his backside out and knock Derrell off. I was about to interfere and stop it, but Derrell was enjoying it so much and I just kept observing. At one point Derrell’s face lit up with the biggest smile. He did not seem to care about the other children. He just wanted to interact with Mark. At this point, I realized that Mark seemed to form relationships or bonds more effectively with the boys because of how he plays with them on the court or outside before each session. I wondered Matt understood that made him more comfortable. He never held back with the children when many other USC students seemed uncomfortable, disconnected, or uninterested in engaging with the children.

The children read with literacy partners for 30 minutes today. Some chose to read outside, while a few read inside the community center. I stayed inside the community center to speak with Ms. Bea. She mentioned that she was looking for someone to come help the children with math homework. She was concerned about the children who live in Ivy Village because she knew, through speaking with their mothers, that they are struggling in math at school. Ms. Bea explained that she has been to her daughter’s school and has asked teachers and administrators for suggestions to support the children of Ivy Village with after-school programs. She said that she wanted them to know that she, as a mother and residence manager at Ivy Village Apartments, wanted to partner with the school and support the children in academics. She asked for assistance as
well and said that she could pay a teacher or tutor to come out after school to work with the children and help them with their math homework.

I started to think of next year’s EDTE 400 sections. I began thinking of ways to have EDTE 400 students become math tutors. We talked about this idea and she agreed that it could work. She would be site supervisor and I would send students to her. She could be there to assist and could sign EDTE 400 student in and log their hours. As we were talking, Maeva’s mother came in with her newborn daughter to talk to Ms. Bea and wait for the Freedom Readers Literacy Partners session to end. She told Ms. Bea that Maeva was having a difficult time adjusting to the newborn. She explained that Maeva was “the baby” of the family and she seems jealous of the baby. Ms. Bea assured her that it was not unusual and that she would eventually get used to the baby. They both recognized the behavior changes in Maeva, being less attentive in school or in Freedom Readers Literacy Partners.

Later that day when I was driving back to campus with three of USC students who regularly rode home with me, Mattie who normally partnered with Maeva, mentioned how uncooperative she was. She said, “I don’t know what Maeva’s deal was today, but she was bad the entire time.” I asked her what Maeva did and she replied, “She just wasn’t paying attention and wouldn’t do anything! She was throwing food at her sister at one point!” I shared what I heard from Maeva’s mom. Mattie then said that she did not even know that Maeva had a newborn sister. We talked about how changes in the home, like a newborn sibling, can cause children to seek attention by acting out. I was trying to help Mattie and the others expand their perspectives on understanding “bad” behavior by learning more personal information about their family. We also talked about
how common this is for children, and one of the students riding in the car said that she acted similarly when she was young and her younger sister was born.

_April 17th session._ During this _Freedom Readers Literacy Partners_’ session, partners read for 30 minutes and then were asked to draw visual representations of their book's theme with chalk on the basketball court. Everyone was interacting during the session activity: smiling, laughing, talking, and drawing. Even some of the USC females, who often appeared withdrawn, were laughing, drawing, and interacting more with the Ivy Village children. A few partners chose to do body sketches, and the children were giggling as they traced the USC students. I particularly noticed today how much the Ivy Village children love to present their work. They each seem much more comfortable presenting in front of the whole group than they were during the first couple sessions of _Freedom Readers Literacy Partners_. Everyone had a chance to present this day and speak about the theme of their book.

I felt really good about _Freedom Readers Literacy Partners_ on this day and felt much better at this point about how the USC students were interacting with their literacy partners. I noticed that most of the USC students were more comfortable and engaged than they appeared in the beginning of the semester. However, my good feelings about _Freedom Readers Literacy Partners_ were quickly overshadowed by an event that was brought to my attention later that evening when I arrived home and began reading my emails. Cassandra, one of the USC literacy partners, sent me an email describing the following events:

This email is to report some misbehavior among Maeva and Makayla after _Freedom Readers_. I have been volunteering to help Taylor with math, and we did math outside when _Freedom Readers_ is over. Today, however, our tutoring session was interrupted when Maeva and Makayla showed up. At
first I thought their antics were just the playful behavior of young children, but then I realized it was rather malicious. What occurred was Maeva and Makayla took my book bag, purse, jacket, notebook, and pen at different times and proceeded to walk away with them even though I told them to bring them back. Also, Maeva proceeded to show me how loud she could be and screamed in my ear a couple of times at the top of her lungs in a very high pitch. Maeva also said that I need to do my hair and that I should braid it and put beads in it. Maeva then proceeded to get on top of the table and jump on me, and she dug through my hair. She even scratched my scalp. There was a bag of Cheetos on the picnic table where I was trying to tutor Taylor. Maeva put several Cheetos in my hair, and Makayla threw them in my hair. There was also a cup of pudding on the picnic table. Makayla put it in my purse (she unzipped my purse and stuck it in). I took it out. Then Maeva put the cup of pudding in my hair. I removed it. Maya also took my pen and tried to write on the shed. With the help of Taylor and Sam, I recovered my things except I was told that Maeva took the top of my pen and threw it over a fence. I did tell Maeva and Makayla to return my things, to stop, and that what they were doing was not nice. They persisted anyway. Needless to say, Taylor's and my tutoring session was greatly interrupted. I told my father, who is an attorney, what occurred, and he said that what Maeva and Makayla did was assault. If there is anything you can do to help correct Maya and Makayla's behavior, it would be greatly appreciated.

I immediately sent Cassandra an email in response to her report. It said, “I am so sorry to hear about this incident Cassandra. That is so kind of you to stay after to help Taylor.

And I apologize for Maeva's and Makayla's behavior. I will address this immediately with Ms. Bea. Thank you for sharing this with me.” I then emailed Ms. Bea and received a reply for her the following day. She said that Maeva's and Makayla's behaviors were “absolutely unacceptable.” She explained that she planned to speak with their mother immediately and that she wanted the girls and their mother to speak with Cassandra before the next (and final) session on April 24th. I emailed Cassandra and relayed this message to her. I then asked her if she planned to attend the last session on the 24th. She replied, “Thank you. Unfortunately I will not be there on the 24th as I have to attend my grandfather's funeral in Maryland that day.”
I was so disappointed that Cassandra experienced these events. Maeva and MaKayla seemed even more excited about *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* than the other children participating. They became more responsive to the USC students and engaged in reading and activities over the course of the semester, and I was so proud of them. Even Cassandra’s attitude changed over the course of the semester. She seemed more confident and comfortable at Ivy Village than she seemed at the beginning of the semester. I was worried about Cassandra was going to take away from this experience as a result of her experience that day with Maeva and MaKayla. Cassandra attended the final EDTE 400 class session and presented her service learning experiences. She did not mention the incident with Maeva and MaKayla and focused on positive aspects of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners* and the Ivy Village children and community. I followed up with Cassandra about this incident when I sent her the narrative profile I developed from her data (see Chapter Four). I asked her how she felt, at that point, about the incident that occurred that day and if it changed her perspectives at all. She just said that she forgave Maeva and MaKayla for the choices that they made that day and that she did not think differently because of it.

**Conversations with Ms. Dee throughout sessions.** I was able to get to know and learn from Ms. Bea as I spoke with her during *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners’* sessions. When I did not observe or interact with USC students and Ivy Village children, I talked with Ms. Bea. I learned many things throughout our conversations. I learned that Ivy Village Apartments is a privately owned housing development receiving federal financial assistance to support the property and the residents. I learned that additional guidelines - designed at both the private and federal level for Ivy Village management –
provide support to residents with regard to employment, education, health, and social activities. As a result of these guidelines for and expectations of managers of Ivy Village, Ms. Bea had rewarding experiences as a residence manager there. Most of Ms. Bea’s rewarding experiences described supporting residents in receiving education or seeking job opportunities. She shared a conversation she recently had with an adult resident who is in school:

   I was talking to a resident who is in school and wants to change her major. I said, “I don’t care if you change your major as long as you stay in school! I don’t care how long it takes you to graduate just as long as you graduate! You need to do that for yourself and for your children!”

We discussed how important it was for the Ivy Village children to visit the USC students at the University of South Carolina’s campus. The first year of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*, Ms. Dee suggested that the children and mothers meet me and the USC students participating in the program at USC. They came one day in April, and we walked through the campus and into the Russell House where there is a bookstore, food venues, a game room, and student resources. Ms. Bea brought that up in our conversation. She said, “I was sharing with my mom that my most exciting moment as a residence manager here was when we were able to go to USC.” She also shared a story about meeting a 76-year-old male resident when she first took the position as resident manager. He asked her if she could help him, or find someone who could help him, learn to read. Ms. Bea found a nearby reading center for him. He walked to that reading center every day and eventually learned to read. Ms. Bea always supplied residents with information about resources for achieving their goals. Another story she shared described how she provided information to the residents:

   I told my brother that that I was here to teach, but my job is to inform kids.
What they do with it is totally up to them. I was appointed this position for a reason. I actually had a young lady come in today I said, “Are you going to the job fair on Thursday?,” and she replied, “What job fair?” I said, “You don’t read the newspaper?” So when they come in here I am listening. If there is something I can gather from them, the first thing that I am going to do is put it in our newsletter, because people are looking for jobs. People want to go to school. I have people and their loans are in default. Or I had a lady coming in asking about credit and where it needs to be to buy a house. I don’t expect for people to live here the rest of their lives. This is just an open door. We have a swinging door - come in and get yourself stable - and then move on to the next thing. That is what I did. I needed assistance at one time. I was in their place. So I say, “Why you’re here, gather the information.” And this reading program has allowed us to help too.

As I listened to Ms. Bea’s stories, I felt grateful to have the opportunity to be there at Ivy Village to talk with her. I was glad that she felt comfortable enough to share her stories with me. I felt like it helped me understand her and her role as a resident manager, community member, and mother of a participating child of *Freedom Readers Literacy Partners*. 
Step Forward, Step Back Activity

APPENDIX N

Step Forward, Step Back

Participation in this game is voluntary. The last time I played it participants signed a waiver of liability. If I ask a question that you are not comfortable answering, you can simply stand where you are, or lie. It is not always safe for us to tell the truth or reveal who we are. Our political culture that determines the distribution of water is based on the myth that we are all the same. Please do this exercise in silence. If you don’t hear a question, ask me and I will repeat it. If you don’t understand a question, either make a guess or don’t respond to it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Forward</th>
<th>Step Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If your family owned their own home.</td>
<td>1. If either of your parents did not graduate from college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If you or anyone in your immediate family is a doctor, lawyer, minister, teacher, or professional.</td>
<td>2. If you did not vacation outside your home state before you were 18 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were maids, servants, gardeners or baby-sitters in your house.</td>
<td>3. If you are black, Latina, Native American, Indian, Asian, Arab, or Middle Eastern descent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school.</td>
<td>4. If you have ever been denied a job or paid less for comparable work or had a less qualified man promoted over you because of your gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If you have ever written a letter to influence the outcome of a political decision.</td>
<td>5. If you are a survivor of incest, rape, or abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you are a man.</td>
<td>6. If you were raised by someone other than by both of your parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

474
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If, as a white person, you ever worked in a job where people of color held more menial jobs, were paid less or otherwise harassed or discriminated against.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If anyone in your family has had a problem with drug or alcohol abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If your family had more than fifty books in the house when you were growing up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If you ever felt an opportunity or experience was closed to you because you didn’t know how to speak, dress, or act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If your family told you that you could be or do anything that you choose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If you have ever been unable to attend an event or gathering because it was not accessible to people with your disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>If you were taken to art galleries, museums, or plays by your parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>If you have ever felt judged or uncomfortable because of the size, height, or shape of your body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>If you ever attended a private school or summer camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>If your family taught you that police were someone to be feared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>If you grew up expecting that your family would pay for your college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>If your parents told you that you were beautiful or pretty and therefore what you thought or did wasn’t important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>If you believe that police would help you in an emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>If, as a child, you were ever hungry or worried that there would not be enough food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>If you ever inherited, or expect to inherit, money or property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>If your family was ever forced to move because they could not afford to pay their bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>If you or one or both of your parents are or were members of unions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>If you or any member of your immediate family has ever been on welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>If most of your friends are the same race as you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>If you or any member of your family has been incarcerated for reasons other than political activism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>If people with power in your community look like you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>If you have ever lived somewhere that didn’t feel safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>If people that you see in the media, TV, newspapers, and magazines look like you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>If you have ever hesitated to reveal your or your family’s religious tradition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. If, as a child, your family took you to a museum, historical site, concert, or play.  
19. If you are queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Now I want us to imagine that we are all together on a life raft in the middle of the ocean. We have one barrel of water. The first people to touch this wall will decide how that water will be distributed among us.
APPENDIX O
Power Shuffle Activity

Exercise: The Power Shuffle

I will be giving you a series of instructions during the first portion of this exercise. Please follow the instructions in complete silence. "You do not have to identify yourself as a member of a group that is called out if you do not wish to, but you should notice any feeling that come up about not identifying yourself. If you are not sure about which group you belong to, decide for yourself where it makes sense for you to go."

For each of the categories below, say the following: "Please step to the other side of the room if you are. [the category]. [Pause.] Notice who's standing with you. Notice who's not. [Pause.] Notice how you feel. [Pause.] Come back together again."

1. You are a woman.
2. You are Asian, East Asian, South Asian/Indian, or Pacific Islander.
3. You are Latino/a, Chicano/a, or mestizo/a.
4. You are of Arabian descent.
5. You are Native American.
6. You are African-American or black, or of African descent.
7. You are of multi-heritage, and at least one of your parents or grandparents is a person of color.
8. You are of Jewish heritage.
9. You are 45 or over.
10. You are under 21.
11. You were raised poor.
12. You were raised by a single parent or currently are a single parent.
13. One of your parents, or the people who raised you, were or are working-class and did manual labor, skill or unskilled work, or pink-collar clerical or service work to make a living.
14. You were raised in an isolated or farming community.
15. Neither of your parents, or the people who raised you, attended college (or received a college degree).
16. You were raised Catholic.
17. You have a visible or hidden physical disability or impairment.
18. You have ever been seriously or continually sick.
19. You are an immigrant to this country.
20. Your native language is other than English.
21. You come from a family where alcohol or drugs were or are a problem.
22. You were raised in or are now part of a religious community other than Christian.
23. You are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. [Always decide whether it is safe enough to call out this category and don't be overcautious; if no one walks across, you can point out the lack of safety in the group later.]
24. Someone in your family, or a close friend, is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
25. You are a non-management worker and/or do not supervise anyone on your job.
26. You are now or ever have been unemployed, not by choice.
27. You are a veteran.
28. You or a member of your family has ever been labeled mentally ill or crazy.
29. You or a member of your family have ever been incarcerated or been in the juvenile justice system.
30. You were ever publicly labeled fat, whether or not you ever felt fat.

Questions for Discussion Following the Shuffle:
1. How did it feel to be in the group which had to walk across?
2. How did it feel to be in the main group and watch others cross?
3. Did you walk a little or a lot? How do you feel about that?
4. What surprised you during this exercise?
5. How does this activity build community and individual courage?
6. If you were refraining from crossing the line at first but later started to cross, why was that? (increased confidence?, trust?, rapport?)