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A Collaborative Inquiry with White Women About Our Understanding of Difference in Education

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A Collaborative Inquiry With White Women About Our Understanding Of Difference in Education

by

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Dedication

In loving memory of my father, John J. Dray, Jr.

1944-2002

In the final days of your life I learned that in spite of our experiences,

you had your dreams too.

My brother, Lee

Without whom I would not have developed the lens to frame my dissertation.

You nurtured a sense of hope and faith to persevere through the "at-risk"

experiences we endured. You are my inspiration and I thank you.

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A Collaborative Inquiry With White Women About Our Understanding Of Difference in Education

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Although the research literature has documented teacher's deficit beliefs about culturally, linguistically, economically, diverse (CLED) students, the literature on shifting deficit thinking has itself often been characterized by a deficit view of educators as the problem. This position places teachers at the center of the discourse rather than examining the ways in which competing discourses about diversity in general and special education as well as society at large serve to complicate teachers' ability to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1990). A critical consciousness refers to the process of learning to recognize the social, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic contradictions that account for the disparities in education (e.g., disproportionate representation in special education, drop-out rate, achievement, etc) as a way of understanding and changing such oppressive and inequitable practices (Britzman, 1991; Freire, 1990).

Notably absent are the voices of the teachers involved in transformative learning experiences (Cranton1994; Mezirow, 1990, 2000) and their perceptions of factors, which facilitated their growth. In particular, I collaboratively explored the interrelationships between the life experiences of five White women and their reported shift toward a critical consciousness about difference as a result of their engagement in a Master's level course on intercultural communication in special education. I conducted surveys, individual interviews, written reflection and collaborative inquiry (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Brooks & Edwards, 1997) to actively engage my participants in a critical discussion/reflection about our life stories and experience in the course. Participants were not only actively involved in the data collection but also in the analysis and representation of the data. Findings indicate that participants' development of a critical consciousness about difference was influenced greatly by their exposure to difference, experiences, which disrupted their comfort zone, and influential relationships with others. Characteristics of the course to which participants attributed shifts in their thinking included: a safe environment where their views were accepted, reflective journaling, learning from others, developing another perspective, and viewing the process as an ongoing journey. Ultimately these course experiences resulted in the development of mindfulness, a critical attribute of intercultural competence. Implications for research and teacher education are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

As a Master's student in bilingual special education, I taught full inclusion[1] special education with a kindergarten teacher at an urban elementary school in New Mexico that served primarily Hispanic and American Indian students from low socio-economic backgrounds. I chose to work at this particular school because during my interview, the committee told me about a yearlong professional development diversity-training program they were enrolled in called Organizing for Diversity[2] (ODP). When I took the information back to my Master's advisor at the University, she recognized one of the developers and strongly suggested I work at this school so that I could participate in the training. I remember naively feeling excited and optimistic to be a part of a school that was "willing" to examine the issues of inequity in education and how best to meet the needs of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) learners.

In September, our diversity training began. We would meet in the library once a month for the next year during our early release day on Wednesday. The first meeting was very exciting and the staff was very responsive. Everyone left the meeting feeling positive and ready to meet the challenge. As the months went

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1 Full inclusion, to me, occurs when the general education and special education teacher co-teach and co-plan lessons together so that the general education teacher serves as the content expert while the special education teacher serves as a the delivery expert. Both teachers teach but the special education teacher recommends accommodations and modifications to the delivery of content

2 Organizing for Diversity was a 5-year research project housed at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory that targeted urban schools in need of meeting the diverse learners. It was a year-long training that included 11 modules related to understanding the cultural contexts of teaching and learning.

on, the trainers challenged the "best" practices we used to educate our diverse learners as well as the deficit notion that students' home life and community environment contributed to their lack of academic success. Rather, the locus of control was turned on us as teachers as agents of change. However, one by one as a staff, we slowly became skeptical and resistant to the information that was being presented because we were feeling uneasy about the notion that we might be part of the problem. I have to admit, the resistance movement seduced me as well. My resistance came in the form of intellectually critiquing the approach of the training and remaining silent instead of dialoguing with the teachers and trainers about the information presented and the deficit thinking prevalent among our staff. I now realize that my silence and intellectualizing prevented me from really examining my own role in reifying the system.

Since this experience I have continued to search for answers to what went wrong and why we responded to the training with such aversion. I went on to present at conferences and work with the diversity trainers of the project in search of answers and to become a diversity trainer. As part of my doctoral studies, I have taken courses from a multicultural perspective that present alternative paradigms for understanding deficit thinking and structural inequalities in education and working toward a social change model of responsive equitable education. In Spring 2003, I was a teaching assistant for

Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education. During this experience, I saw myself in many of the students in the class and recall an incident that occurred during the initial diversity training I went through in New Mexico.

I recall one of the diversity trainers asked, "How many of you expect your students to go on to college?" No one raised his or her hand. So she said, "Okay how many of you expect your students to graduate?" Silence still, and then one teacher said, "We'll be happy if they learn to read." I did not raise my hand because I worked with kindergarten children with "severe" and multiple disabilities and was unsure of what their future experiences in the education system would hold for them. I knew the reality, that it would be the combined quality of educational experiences throughout K-12 that would influence their fate. To this day I wonder why didn't the teachers raise their hand? Were others asskeptical I was of the educational system? OR Was everyone a deficit thinker? Did they truly believe that their students would not make it to college because of their cultural, linguistic, and economic background? This incident has lead me to think more about the complex nature of why people believe what they believe about CLED students in special education.

PROLOGUE REFLECTIONS

As I reflect back on this experience, I recognize the role of Whiteness and privilege that played out in my reactions of "choosing to be silent" and not putting forth my discomfort during the workshops; that in a way, I reified the system of privilege by not saying anything. I recognize now that my own discomfort has motivated me to learn more. Although I went on to present with the diversity trainers at conferences and study with them to learn more about the conversation that was started during the training, I still have many questions about that experience. Why do teachers lose their idealism for cultural pluralism, their zeal for respecting and responding to diversity and that *all* children can learn? Do they have it to begin with? I wanted to know why some of the teachers who had had "multicultural" content as part of their teacher education held deficit views about their students and the families rather than looking critically at oppressive structures in education?

In what ways can teachers recognize and understand the role of whiteness, or a system of privilege that merits White ways of knowing? Why did I, who had been trained as a bilingual special educator and understood the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy almost, become re-socialized into deficit thinking? In what way does Whiteness play a role in my life? Why was I unable to recognize my own privilege in reifying hegemony by recognizing the resistance movement of the faculty at my school and yet remaining silent? Why did I get to the perspective I have? Why do I critique a system of oppression and understand

the importance of valuing differences and differentiating instruction to facilitate academic success of my students?

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Cultural Discontinuities and Consequences

As racial, ethnic, economic, and linguistic diversity continues to grow among the school-aged population (Losen & Orfield, 2002), white teachers remain the majority at 86% (Ooka Pang, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The research literature has documented teachers' deficit beliefs about culturally, linguistically, economically, diverse (CLED) students (e. g., Neal, McCray, & Webb-Johnson, 2001; Obiakor, 1999; Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd, 1996). At the same time, CLED learners continue to experience the pervasive problem of academic failure, inappropriate referral, disproportionate representation in special education, high dropout rates, and retention (McCray & García, 2002; Townsend, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Their underachievement has, in part, been attributed to the cultural and linguistic discontinuities that result from the demographic differences between students and teachers (Sleeter, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

The cultural discontinuities among teachers and the students they educate (Hollins, 1996), can result in educators misinterpreting different ability or "low achievement" as disability. It has been suggested that this misinterpretation stems from the reproduction of dominant discourses about educating CLED learners, which continue to marginalize children who are not from the mainstream (Obiakor, 1999; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). For example, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) recommends "effective" standards of educational practice that are scientific (evidence-based) to promote equitable education for all students because the

assumption is that "research-based" practices that have been proven effective must work for *all* students. However, many of the practices that have been researched are mainstream constructions of *effective* teaching practices and have not been tested on populations for which they are now being used (McCray & García, 2002). With the privileging of mainstream constructions of *effective* practices comes a potential erasure of "other" perspectives in education, thus *other* is re-situated as *underserved, disadvantaged* and/or *at-risk* in relation to the mainstream/dominant perspective (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Delpit, 1995). Some argue that NCLB is founded on a student- and family-deficit model which explains students' underachievement as manifestation of deficient characteristics of home life such as limited English proficient, low socio-economic status, single parent home, etc. (Townsend, 2002). As the dominant discourse in education continues to emphasize a deficit perspective of students who come from CLED backgrounds (and/or experiences not valued by the mainstream), such students can become marginalized by the system whereby education is viewed as remediation centered on fixing children rather than building on what children know. Instead of affirming the diverse experiences as a source of culture capital (Nieto, 1996), students are viewed for what they don't have as compared to the *illusionary* norm of White, middle-class America.

In special education, the approach has been to "focus on the presumed deficits of the child and to provide remedial or compensatory instruction [with] little attention [given] to the culture of the school or to the nature of instructional program" (Keogh, Gallimore, & Weisner, 1997, p. 110). The *illusionary norm* is

manifested in two ways: First, federal definitions of disabilities are directly linked to dominant cultural norms of behavior within the school culture whereby students who behave or learn in ways different than the dominant culture are deemed as deficient and in need of services (Hill, de Valenzuela, Cervantes, & Baca, 1998). Second, the way students with disabilities are "remediated" follows an assimilationist model whereby students are taught mainstream constructions for learning and behaving. So students in special education are expected to adapt toward the illusionary norm.

Approaches to Shifting Beliefs

Since 1978, researchers in the field of special education have recognized the need to infuse multicultural perspectives in teacher preparation programs to address and counter deficit beliefs of difference in education, more specifically CLED students (Trent & Artiles, 1998). However, much of the multicultural content has emphasized a "tourist" approach that serves to perpetuate stereotypes rather than dismantle them (Cochran-Smith, 1995). In addition, much of the research that utilizes "various methods to foster change in teachers' thinking, attitudes, and behaviors regarding cultural diversity…have produced mixed results because they often focused on content rather than process of cross-cultural learning" (McAllister & Irvine, 2000, p. 3) and lack a critical analysis of the structures that inform *why* teachers believe what they do and how they make meaning of newfound beliefs that challenge the dominant discourse on education (Sleeter, 2001). More attention has been paid to teachers' continued deficit beliefs (e. g., Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd, 1996; Lamorey, 2002) and the effects on

CLED students (e. g., Obiakor, 1999; Townsend, 2002) than a critical examination of how pre-service teachers came to believe what they do, why they believe what they do about working with CLED students, and what works to shift teachers beliefs. Finally, notably absent in the research literature on shifting beliefs are the voices of the teachers and their perceptions of factors which facilitate their growth, as well as an examination of their personal and professional life experiences which have shaped their beliefs.

REFRAMING TEACHER PREPARATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Traditionally, teachers' deficit beliefs have been positioned at the center of the multicultural teacher preparation discourse (e. g. McIntyre, 1997; Obiakor, 1999; Sleeter, 1992), which serves to complicate teachers' ability to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1990) because there is a de-emphasis on the ways in which competing discourses about difference/diversity in general and special education influence teachers' beliefs. *Critical consciousness* refers to the process of learning to recognize the social, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic contradictions that account for the disparities in education (e. g., disproportionate representation of race/ethnicity in special education, drop-out rates, low achievement, etc) as a way of understanding and changing such oppressive and inequitable practices (Britzman, 1991; Freire, 1990).

In reviewing the literature, the process of developing a critical consciousness has primarily been promoted within the context of multicultural-centered coursework. Multicultural-centered coursework has made concerted efforts to promote transformative learning experiences for educators in that such

coursework serves to shift teachers' understanding about working with culturally, linguistically, economically diverse learners away from deficit perspectives toward a pluralistic and critical understanding of difference. Adapting the definition from the adult learning model of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1995), *transformative learning* is the complex interplay that occurs when an individual's consciousness is shifted toward a critical understanding of the institutional inequities inherent in society, in particular education, and promotes educational practices that counter hegemony (Freire, 1970; O'Sullivan, 1999). As a result, research on teachers' perceptions needs to examine the system or contexts in which teachers are being socialized and educated, in order to understand why teachers believe what they do. Drawing from sociocultural theory, we must understand the social relations in which the individual exists to understand the individual (Wertsch, 1991). With this in mind, examination of the complex interplay of teachers' personal and professional life experiences that shape why and how they believe what they do about difference in education (e. g., CLED students) becomes critical in understanding the individual teacher. As suggested by de Valenzuela, Connery, & Musanti (2000) teacher preparation in special education needs a merger of perspectives from socio-cultural, multicultural, and critical theory to address the social, historical, and political constructs that influence classroom, curricula, and academic cultures of practice.

Conceptual Framework

I draw on critical theory, whiteness studies, and feminism as tools for understanding the varied layers of what shapes White women's understanding of

difference in education and what works to help them shift away from deficit notions of difference. Feminism has its roots in critique of the discourse that created the binary of man and woman, the inconsistencies or interruptions that shape what it means to be a woman, and the power structures that serve to oppress those who are not male (Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1997). Similarly contemporary Whiteness studies serve to break the binary of race as a black/white dichotomy toward examining the intersections of race with multiple identities such as class, gender, political orientation, religious practices, and historical context (Gallagher, 2000; Omi & Winant, 2000). Critical theorists devote their research to examining the power structures that shape individuals' beliefs and actions (Schwandt, 2001), while deconstructivists dismantle the power structures by examining the contradictions of those structures (Weedon, 1997).

A major theme of my research is to recognize and situate White women in a broader sense as products of their socialization and examine the juxtaposition of power structures. From a critical perspective, I examine the ways in which White women's perceptions of working with CLED students in special education are influenced by their experiences growing up White in the "privileged dominant class" (Hatch, 2002) and the structural forces that shape the dominant discourse about difference in education. I recognize the structural forces that shape discourse and then examine the interruptions that complicate such discourse. One of the tools of deconstruction is the concept of looking beyond the structure to recognize the interruptions/contradictions of constructs and binaries. My research attempts to break away from essentializing differences toward critically reflecting

on the role of multiple identities (e. g., race, gender, class, education, context, etc.) and the contradictions in those multiple identities (i.e., white teachers are much more than racialized beings). In particular, identities can be interrupted by life histories/experiences, which influence our beliefs and/or perceptions about difference in education (Gilliam, 2003; Weedon, 1999). From a sociocultural perspective White women are products of their socialization of being women and White. As Howard (1999) suggests in his poignant book about White teachers in multiracial schools, "We Can't Teach What We Don't Know," similarly White women cannot deconstruct and reconstruct their identity if this process has not been a part of their education or socialization. Pugach and Seidl (1998) posit that White women have not experienced viewing themselves as racialized beings. Thus, they have had few opportunities, if any, to negotiate their racialized identity and how it privileges them while marginalizing others. This study is an attempt to provide an opportunity for White women to engage in an examination of their life histories/experiences and how these have shaped their understanding of difference.

Purpose of Study

This collaborative inquiry (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Brooks & Edwards, 1997) represents a move to (a) shift the deficit paradigm from teachers-as-problem toward a structural understanding that situates teachers within the contexts that they have been socialized to understand their beliefs about difference in education and (b) reduce the power differential of researcher-as-expert to a collaborative co-creation toward understanding *why* teachers believe what they do about difference in education. In particular, I collaboratively studied White

women who were enrolled in a Master's level course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education* that served as a transformative learning experience. I used collaborative inquiry to gather life histories of the participants, including myself, to understand the intersection of previous life experiences with learning that occurred as a result of participating in the course. The intention was to collaboratively explore with White women (a) aspects of the course that facilitated a shift toward a critical consciousness and (b) personal life experiences that have shaped what they believe about difference in education. Rather than merely reporting deficit beliefs or the outcomes of addressing beliefs, the final analysis includes a collective, multivocal account of our exploration. Participants were not only actively involved in the data collection but also in the analysis and representation of the data.

My research questions were:

How do White women in education construct and re-construct their understanding of difference in education, particularly related to race/ethnicity, language, social class, and ability, as a result of their engagements with the course and their broader life experiences?

a. What aspects of the course influenced White women's changed perspective about difference?

b. What aspects of each woman's life experience shape her understanding of difference?

In an attempt to break free from reifying deficit thinking, I used collaborative inquiry methods from a critical feminist perspective to (a) recognize the systemic or structural discourses that influence teachers' beliefs, and simultaneously shed light on the contradictions that interrupt how teachers are negotiating their understanding of difference and (b) co-construct meaning with White women to capture their understanding of why they believe what they do about difference in education (Hatch, 2002; Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000).

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As the dominant discourse in education continues to emphasize a deficit perspective of difference in education, teachers must become increasingly aware of the competing discourses about difference in order to resist marginalization of students who are different. Low achievement among students from culturally, linguistically and economically diverse (CLED) backgrounds has traditionally been attributed to their family and community characteristics, which results in deficit views about difference (e. g., culture, language and economic status) in education. Much of the literature on shifting deficit views has focused on *what* teachers believe, centering on reporting their continued deficit beliefs. Rather Sleeter (2001) suggests a need to understand *why* teachers believe what they do about difference by situating the discourse on the structural factors or larger system that contributes to inequitable educational opportunities for students from CLED backgrounds.Teacher preparation efforts have also traditionally focused more on the content of multicultural education, versus the process of intercultural teaching and learning (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Missing in this discussion is a careful examination of the competing discourses in education, as well as the complex interaction between teachers' socialization, life histories, and other events, which may influence their ability to develop a critical consciousness. Consequently, teacher education efforts may not result in development of a critical consciousness among teachers.

Using critical theory and feminism to guide the conceptual framework for designing the study, I conducted a collaborative inquiry to explore our collective understanding of difference in education in relation to (a) our life histories and (b) learning that occurred in a Master's level course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education.* As such, my goal was to move away from blaming the teachers toward understanding how they are enacting different ideologies and beliefs about difference (e. g, CLED students) in education according to the power structures or rhetoric of special education, teacher preparation training, personal life experiences, and the multiple identities that they embody such as race, class, gender, education, etc.

Competing Discourses in Education

The research literature has documented teacher's deficit beliefs about culturally, linguistically, economically, diverse (CLED) students (e. g., Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd, 1996; Neal, McCray, & Webb-Johnson, 2001; Obiakor, 1999). In part the literature suggests that White teachers in particular are misinterpreting ability as disability because of a cultural mismatch between teachers and the students they educate (Hollins, 1996; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). Additionally, it has been suggested that this misinterpretation stems from the reproduction of dominant discourses about educating CLED learners that continue to marginalize children who are not from the mainstream (Obiakor, 1999; Pugach & Seidl, 1998; Townsend, 2002). As a result, in this section I take a closer look at the competing discourses in education that serve to complicate special education teachers' understanding of difference.

MISUNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE

In special education, the term "culturally linguistically diverse" (CLD) is used as an umbrella term to connote students from any background *other* than the dominant white mainstream. As a result, race, ethnicity, culture, language dominance, economic status are collapsed and signified by this term. This is problematic because as Pugach & Seidl (1998) suggest, educators must take a "critical look at issues of race, culture, and class and the manner in which these influences are understood or misunderstood and used or misused to explain school failure" (p. 325). In particular, the term "culture" has been misused in education because it has been situated in a way that connotes a deficit; i.e., when we talk of cultural differences in education it is typically in a manner that suggests those who have cultural differences are "disadvantaged" (Hill, de Valenzuela, Cervantes, & Baca, 1998) which can position them to become marginalized by the system.

Understanding Culture

Culture and learning go hand in hand because education is a tool for transmitting culture and culture is the lens from which we view the world and create knowledge; it shapes how we learn (García, Pérez & Ortiz, 2000). Culture not only influences how students think and learn but how teachers teach and how the educational system is set up to teach and assess what is learned (Harry, Grenot-Scheyer, Smith-Lewis, Park, Xin, & Schwartz, 1995). As Holquist (1981, P. 165) says "I can mean what I say, but only indirectly, at second remove, in the words I take and give back to the community according to the protocols it establishes" (As cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 68). The social environment in which

the student exists directly affects how that student learns to learn, process information, and form opinions about his or her world. Therefore "in order to understand the individual it is necessary to understand the social relations in which the individual exists" (Wertsch 1991, p25).

Everyone has culture not just those who look and act differently from the mainstream. As an undergraduate student, I remember feeling that one of the major problems in the US was that Whites "didn't have a culture" like *others* because we have melded from so many different European backgrounds. However, now I understand that I was the "fish who could not see the water." I did not understand that my view of the world, the behaviors I thought were just "normal everyday life," the dominant way of knowing, interacting, and making sense of the world, were actually cultural norms that are part of my white culture.

Gindis (1995) states that Vygotsky perceives "development as a process of mastering cultural means" (p. 80). The very way in which we construct knowledge and process information is a reflection of our culture (Wertsch, 1991). If a student does not exist with in the same culture or use the same language as the school then their differences can become problematic because these values can affect academic achievement (Kea & Utley, 1998; Moll, 1992; Ruiz, 1995). Thus, it is important for educators to understand the cultural contexts in which they teach and how children learn. With this in mind, ignoring the role of culture in child development can be detrimental for children from CLED backgrounds, as they may feel confused or pressured to choose between cultures, thus appearing to reject or devalue one over the other. Ignoring the role of culture can lead to the

teacher perceiving such differences as a deficit of the child (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & López-Torres, 2000; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Delpit, 1995; García, Pérez & Ortiz, 2000; Kendall, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994). As a result, teachers may underestimate children's abilities (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) or worse, turn children off from education because they feel inadequate or incapable (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). For example, if a teacher does not believe the student can perform she or he may not interact with the student in the same way as other students, and may do less to support the student's achievement (Townsend, 2002). Gindis (1995) stated that Vygotsky looks at "handicap as a process, not as a static condition" (p. 80). As such, an individual can become more or less "disabled" depending upon the environment. So that low expectations can lead to further "disabling" a student whereas high expectations can lead to "enabling" a student to be less "disabled." How individuals interact with the person then becomes critical in the success or failure of a student (Gindis, 1995).

Normalizing Disability

The history of special education reflects a long tradition of "normalizing" individuals with disabilities and promoting the related view that learning the dominant cultures ways of knowing and functioning in the larger society will serve in the best interest of such individuals (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). Take for example my Deaf brother who said, "I have worked all my life to make it easier for you (hearing people), not for me. What about me? I will never hear." My brother's inability to hear was more disabling for those who could hear because

they did not know how to communicate with him. Similarly, individuals who speak a language other than English are discouraged to speak and learn in their native language; this is in large part because most educators are monolingual English speakers (Marx, 2001). Thus an illusion is created that somehow English is easier for everyone when really it is only easier for those who do not speak the "other" language. Such ethnocentric practices reflect "normalization" of the English language.

In following the logic of normalization, "abled" educators who work with individuals who are differently-abled (such as Deaf, Blind, Hard of Hearing) are working from assumptions that perpetuate the *illusionary norm*. Because such individuals who are "dis-abled" are characterized by the context of school which "en-ables" them to become "dis-abled" in comparison to the illusionary norm. Cummins (1989) addressed the issue of disproportionate representation of English language learners in special education and suggested that education tends to overemphasize a medical model by focusing on what the child cannot do versus what she or he can do. Adopting the *child as problem* view promotes interventions based on remediation thereby removing the focus off the educational system which potentially may be failing the child. As mentioned earlier, an individual can become more or less "disabled" due to interaction with their environment (Gindis, 1995). Thus, teachers' lowered expectations can further "disable" students. In addition, when a child has a disability often times their cultural and linguistic features of his or her identity become secondary and even unaccounted for in planning their education program (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2000).

As a result, the education plan is centered on the child's "disability" and resources available to serve the needs of the child associated with the "disability", and culture and language are set aside.

DEFICIT THINKING IN POLICY AND EDUCATION

Since the 1960's there has been a pervasive deficit perspective associated with diversity in education that students from culturally, linguistically, and economically different (CLED) backgrounds are viewed as "at-risk" or "struggling learners" in need of "extra support" to succeed in school (Townsend, 2002). As a result teachers equate student "underachievement" or "failure" to individual or environmental factors (Valencia, 1997; Walters, 2002) rather than understanding the underlying "culture of schooling" (Hollins, 1996) as promoting mainstream practices that reproduce cultural oppression and institutional racism in the school context (Gay, 2002; Valencia, 1997).

Troubling Consequences of School Reform Movements

Deficit thinking is further evidenced by the rise in national school reform movements such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Even Start Family Literacy Program that target "struggling" or "disadvantaged" students and families, which perpetuate the notion that those who experience the world different from the mainstream or for whom knowledge is constructed in a different way than that valued by schools are seen as "deficient" and in need of services. For example, the National Research Council (2002) report on *Minority Students In Special And Gifted Education*, suggests that poverty is a major factor in creating "at-risk" situations whereby "disabilities" are more prevalent within that sector of the

population and services need to target such populations so that "disabilities" are prevented and reduced. The NRC committee asks the following question:

> Is there reason to believe that there is currently a higher incidence of special needs or giftedness among some racial/ethnic groups? Specifically, are there biological and social or contextual contributors to early development that differ by race or ethnicity? (p. ES-3)

The committee responds:

> Our answer to this question is a definitive "yes." We know that minority children are disproportionately poor, and poverty is associated with higher rates of exposure to harmful toxins, including lead, alcohol, and tobacco, in early stages of development. Poor children are also more likely to be born with low birthweight, to have poorer nutrition, and to have home and child care environments that are less supportive of early cognitive and emotional development than their majority counterparts. When poverty is deep and persistent, the number of risk factors rises, seriously jeopardizing development. (p. ES-3)

However, Losen & Orfield (2002) state that poverty does not explain overrepresentation in special education for multiple reasons. First, overrepresentation by race is only found in high incidence disability categories such as, mental retardation (MR), learning disabilities (LD), and emotional

disturbances (ED), and not in any of the medically diagnosed disabilities such as Deaf, Blind, and other low incidence categories. Second, Hispanic (or Latino) populations do not experience the same overrepresentation in special education as Blacks, yet they share the risk for poverty, exposure to toxins, and low academic achievement. As well, "black children, especially males, were more likely to be labeled mentally retarded" (Losen & Orfield, 2002, p. xxiv) in wealthier districts.

Valencia (1997) suggests that two of the central tenets of deficit thinking are the phenomena of "blaming the victim" and "educability." Rather than examining the system that creates inequity, the NRC report on *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education* emphasizes the "risk" factors associated with "minority" and low-income groups, thus blaming the victim. The report suggests a "cause-effect" relationship with the logic that minority = poor = high risk= disability. Thus, disability is linked to group membership. The implication is that different races are "pre-disposed" to have higher prevalence of disability due to their higher rates of low socioeconomic status that create "genetic risk factors," which can further perpetuate stereotypes. So it is expected that "minority" students will have a higher rate of disability. The challenge I propose is to question how the education system values diverse perspectives. By creating "at-risk" programs that serve to assimilate diverse learners toward the illusionary norm? By enforcing direct-explicit empirical methods of teaching that serve to manufacture learning in a rigid manner and undermine diversity? By creating standards of learning that reflect mainstream constructions of knowledge?

My goal here is not to banish completely our current system of education but to present the extreme in an effort to raise awareness. To reveal the inequity present in current day education so that we can come together to re-construct how we educate and value learners. Valencia states that:

> …description, explanation, and prediction of behavior are central to the way the deficit thinking model operates. It is also important to underscore that the fourth aim (modification or intervention) of the social and behavioral sciences regarding human behavior is integral to our understanding of the functioning of the deficit thinking framework. This means that deficit thinking sometimes offers a prescription in its approach to dealing with people who are targeted populations, for example, low-SES Puerto Ricans. (p. 7)

Thus, educators are fed deficit views of their students who come from culturally linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds. For example, the NRC committee recommends an early identification and intervention-based model that serves to identify and target "high risk" students (e. g. minority students who come from economically disadvantaged environments) to provide them with the skills necessary to achieve academically through "universal screening" and intervention in reading, and "universal behavior management interventions, early behavior screening, and techniques to work with children at risk for behavior problems" (p. ES-7). The question is how do teachers maintain a critical

perspective in teaching CLED students given that the socio-political and historical context of education promotes deficit thinking about such students?

Additionally such mandates as NCLB, are seemingly well-intentioned proposals with inherent assumptions about education and family that are based on "a child and family deficit model" (Townsend, 2002, p. 727). That is, any family who does not operate in ways of the mainstream is cast as "deficient" through an "at-risk" label that serves to marginalize students and families who do not operate from the dominant discourse on parenting, learning, and making sense of the world (Delpit, 1995; Hollins, 1996; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994). For example, language use has become one of the ways in which students and families (who predominantly speak languages other than standard English) are marginalized with in the education system because it has been long believed that learning English-only is much easier than learning two languages for the reason of meritocracy. The dominant belief is that English proficiency ultimately serves as a factor toward social and economic mobility in the larger society of the United States.

Valencia (1997) suggests that systematic miscommunication due to linguistic difference often leads "to trouble, conflict and school failure" because students are written off as "unmotivated to learn" (p. 1), which reifies deficit notions students who speak languages and/or dialects other than "standard" English. Thus, it becomes essential for students to master the dominant discourse of school in order to "achieve," which leads to policy, pedagogy, and research agendas that perpetuate an assimilation approach to education. So, how can

educators infuse a culturally responsive pedagogy when policy and reform movements are centering White dominant ways of knowing as benchmarks and standards for learning?

That is not to say that CLED students would not benefit from such school reform efforts; however such approaches continue to disadvantage the knowledge that CLED students bring with them to school by utilizing a "remedial" or "tutorial" perspective. Such reform efforts mirror an assimilationist approach that is ethnocentric where mainstream values are at the core of the philosophy and the goal is to shape CLED students to be more like the mainstream.

Troubling Scientific, Empirically-Based Practice

A common belief is that scientific-empirically based practices will promote equitable education for all students because research-based practices have been proven effective; thus they must work for *all* students. However, many of the practices that have been researched are mainstream constructions of effective teaching practices and have not been tested on populations for which they are now being used (McCray & García, 2002). With the privileging of mainstream constructions of effective practices comes an erasure of "other" perspectives in education, thus "other" is re-situated as "underserved" "disadvantaged" and/or "at-risk" (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001) in relation to the mainstream/dominant perspective. As well, Pugach (2001) suggests that disregarding the contextual factors such as race, class, culture, and language when understanding "disability" can result in "misconceptions of disability as diversity" (McCray & García, 2002, p. 599).

Teacher Preparation

Since 1978, researchers in the field of special education have recognized the need to infuse multicultural perspectives in teacher preparation programs (Trent & Artiles, 1998), however many of the courses that incorporate multicultural aspect of education emphasize content over process of cross-cultural learning (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Additionally studies that have examined the effects of multicultural centered coursework have focused on *what* teachers believe, which has led to numerous reports of teachers continued deficit beliefs about difference (Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd; Lamorey, 2002; Pleasants, Johnson, & Trent, 1998; Sobel, Taylor, Kalisher, & Weddle-Steinberg, 2002). As such, this study serves to gain a deeper understanding of *why* teachers believe what they do about difference in education. With this in mind, Britzman (2003) suggests the need to recognize teaching as dialogic and that teacher preparation programs should allow opportunities for teachers to critically reflect on their learning in relation to their biographies.

TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT DIFFERENCE

As part of my search for studies on teacher beliefs about difference in special education, I accessed a database of 27 years of empirical studies in special education gathered in preparation for a manuscript co-authored by my dissertation chair (See McCray & García, 2002 for a more detailed discussion of database). This database was gathered with the intent of tallying empirically-based articles related to meeting the needs of students from CLED backgrounds published in academic journals in the field of special education. As I reviewed the database, I

selected articles that addressed teacher beliefs of students from CLED backgrounds. Of the seven available empirically based studies on teacher beliefs about CLED students in special education, I categorized them in two ways. First, studies that focused on reporting teachers' deficit beliefs related to perceptions of race, culture, socio-economic class, and language differences and their influence on expectations of CLD students and/or perceptions ability/disability (Aloia, 1981; Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd, 1996; Kaufman, 1980; Lamorey, 2002). Second, studies that report the effects of multicultural centered approaches in teacher preparation of pre-service special education teachers (Pleasants, Johnson, & Trent, 1998; Trent, Pernell, Mungai, & Chimedza, 1998; Sobel, Taylor, Kalisher, & Weddle-Steinberg, 2002).

Special Education Teacher Preparation

In a literature review of multicultural education in teacher education and special education, Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox (1998) found that "most studies were concerned with linking process variables (e. g. course content, fieldwork, observations) with outcome variables (e. g. attitudes, perceptions of value)" (p. 9). In the three studies on effects of teacher preparation programs that address teacher beliefs in special education, I found a similar trend to Webb-Johnson, et. al. (1998), in that the studies linked process variables (reflective journaling, concept map, and portfolio) with outcomes of pre-service teachers' shifting beliefs. While the researchers present data that support the use of reflection in shifting beliefs, like Sleeter (2001) I found no critical analysis of the underlying structures that influence what teachers believe and how they are

making sense of their beliefs in their reflections about working with CLED students in special education.

Multicultural Teacher Preparation

Additionally, Sleeter (2001) found an overwhelming presence of Whiteness in current approaches in multicultural education, meaning that most of the literature reporting on multicultural theoretical perspectives, program descriptions, or effects of shifting belief do not address the institutional and structural forces that reify inequality in schools for CLED learners. In fact, of the related literature in multicultural education that I reviewed, I found that studies of teacher beliefs about CLED students position *teachers as problem* rather than situating them in the structure that has socialized them (Marx, 2001; Guerra, García, & Betsinger, 2000; McIntyre, 1997). I found similar phenomena in the special education literature (e. g., Pleasants, Johnson, & Trent, 1998; Sobel, Taylor, Kalisher, & Weddle-Steinberg, 2002; Trent, Pernell, Mungai, & Chimedza, 1998).

Need To Address Beliefs

Pugach & Seidl (1998) suggest that "White teachers do not often experience a 'racialized identity' (though, indeed they have one) nor have many had the opportunity to think about what it might be like to be a person of color in a racist society" (p. 325). As a result White educators often times have not examined the complex relationship among students' racial and political identities and how it affects student behavior (Pugach & Seidl). Thus, the need to self-actualize and understand personal culture and its' influences on the way one

behaves and interacts with the world and to validate *others* experiences is a necessary component of teacher education (Delpit, 1995; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994 Nieto, 1996). A review of teachers' beliefs in educational research suggests that teachers' previous experiences influence how beliefs are constructed and there is "a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices" (Pajares, 1992, p. 326). With this in mind, it is essential that teacher preparation programs address teachers' beliefs and take measures to dialogue about previous experience that influence what teachers believe.

Trent & Artiles (1998) state that teacher preparation programs "have tried to deal with the cultural differences without examining the complexities of schooling in our changing society" (p. 2). Such approaches look toward celebrating differences, which potentially serve to undermine the role of the cultural contexts of teaching and learning. Meaning that schooling is a process of acculturation and that merely celebrating differences can further perpetuate stereotypes, tokenizing difference (Cochran-Smith, 1995). As a result, teachers lack awareness of systemic, societal, and institutional contributions for CLED students' perceived academic failure.

The literature suggests that reflective journaling is one way for teachers to become more culturally sensitive and aware through critically negotiating about their classroom practice and identify alternative ways of responding to diversity in schools (Cabello & Burnstein, 1995; Sobel, Taylor, Kalisher, & Weddle-Steinberg, 2002). Thus far, the prevailing perspective, in teacher preparation that

addresses teachers' beliefs about CLED students, places White teachers' deficit beliefs or cultural misunderstandings at the center of the discourse rather than examining the competing discourses in education which serve to socialize teachers' thinking.

REFRAMING TEACHER PREPARATION

> The achievement of educational equity and social justice requires the development of a multidimensional theoretical paradigm that is sufficiently comprehensive to address the issues of power, discrimination, and status within today's educational system. (de Valenzuela, Connery, & Musanti, 2000, p. 118)

The process of becoming a teacher is dialogic in that teaching is about negotiating the multiple identities we possess with in the system of schooling (Britzman, 1991; 2003). Those multiple identities are complex and shape who we are as educators and individuals. Some examples are demographic identity such as race, class, gender, culture, etc.; family identity such as mother, daughter, sister, etc.; educational identity such as quality of educational experiences, level of education, educational specialties, etc.; and occupational identity, which entails different occupations held, experiences in those occupations, and one's connection to them. Thus the dialogic process of becoming a teacher is a struggle that "resides between the biography of a structure called schooling and a biography of a learner" (Britzman, 2003, p. 20). As mentioned earlier the structures of schooling that serve to complicate White special education teachers' understanding

of diversity include the competing discourses of difference to include an assimilationist approach in education that serves to normalize difference (e. g. disability, language dominance, culture, etc.).

Negotiating Multiple Discourses

> Teaching must be situated in relationship to one's biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to learn to become a teacher. With this dialogic understanding, teaching can be reconceptualized as a struggle for voice and discursive practices amid a cacophony of past and present voices, lived experiences, and available practices. The tensions among what has preceded, what is confronted, and what one desires shape the contradictory realities of learning to teach…Teaching concerns coming to terms with one's intentions and values, as well as one's views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiation, and dependency and struggle…The contradiction here is that while learning to teach is individually experienced and hence may be viewed as individually determined, in actuality it is socially [and culturally] negotiated. (Britzman, 2003, p.8)

As a result it is important for educators to recognize and understand the sociocultural context with in which they exist. No one exists in a vacuum, thus in

understanding teachers' beliefs one must examine the sociocultural contexts experienced by the individual in the past present, and future. Special education teacher preparation programs that prepare teachers to work with CLED students, need to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect and dialogue about their beliefs about students who come from experiences different from their own (Trent & Artiles, 1998). Britzman (1991) states that:

> Learning to teach constitutes a time of biographical crisis as it simultaneously invokes one's autobiography. That is, learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (p. 8)

As a result it is important to recognize that becoming a teacher is a process that simultaneously involves negotiating one's discourses of biography and emotions within the institutional structures of schooling.

Need For Dialogue And Critical Reflection

Teachers' need to be given opportunities to critically reflect and discuss this negotiation so that they can understand and counter practices that reproduce inequity and marginalization. Brookfield & Preskill (1999) suggest fifteen benefits of discussion:

1. It helps students to explore a diversity of perspectives;
2. It increases students' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity;
3. It helps students to recognize and investigate their assumptions;
4. It encourages attentive, respectful listening;
5. It develops new appreciation for continuing differences;
6. It increases intellectual agility;
7. It helps students become connected to a topic;
8. It shows respect for students' voices and experiences;
9. It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse;
10. It affirms students as co-creators of knowledge;
11. It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meanings;
12. It develops habits of collaborative learning;
13. It increases breadth and makes students more empathic;

14. It helps students develop skills of synthesis and integration; and

15. It leads to transformation. (p. 22)

Each of these benefits serves a vital role in fostering critical reflection and transformation. Two in particular, are of specific relevance to this study: transformative learning (#15), and habits of collaborative learning (#12), both of which are elaborated further in the sections below.

Transformative Learning

The theory of transformative leaning was put forth by Jack Mezirow (1978) in an effort to understand how individuals can change or transform as a result of adult education. Originally Mezirow's work was inspired by the change he observed in his wife as she reentered college. As a result, he conducted a national study that explored women returning to college, which shaped his original framework for understanding the role of adult education in changing perspectives. *Transformative learning* refers to the process of revising previously held beliefs or assumptions through reflection of contradiction with newfound knowledge and shifting behavior that is consistent with the newfound knowledge or beliefs. It is a shift in consciousness in becoming critically aware of "one's own assumptions as well as those of others, engage fully and freely in discourse to validate one's beliefs, and effectively take reflective action to implement them" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 25).

PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Transformative learning involves the process of recognizing, understanding, and at times adopting new ways of knowing as a result of becoming critically aware that each individual operates from their own life-world or tacit assumptions. Mezirow (2000) terms this critical awareness as transformative insight, which can then spur on an individuals desire to re-frame their views by using discourse to validate or internalize the new perspective. "Mezirow believes adult learning occurs in four ways—elaborating existing frames of reference, learning frames of references, transforming points of view, and transforming habits of mind—and names critical reflection as a component of all of these" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 142). So, critical reflection is the problem solving technique used to sort through and shift our frames of reference. A key component in being critically reflective is the act of dialogue or interactive discussion with others, which can serve a processing tool toward understanding different life-worlds (Kasl & Elias, 2000).

Mezirow suggests that the process of transformative learning involves ten phases that lead to a consciousness shift or perspective change:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared

5. Explorations of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

The process of transformation has been described as a spiraling process in which one constantly evolves through different stages of awareness as new knowledge or situations arise (Wiessner & Mezirow, 2000). As such the phases above should not be viewed as linear or consecutive in that one must move through them in a sequential order. Rather, the process of transformation is individual and each person experiences it differently so that one could be involved in more than one phase at a time or the expression of a phase might not be noticeable to the outside viewer.

Transformative Learning and White Teachers

In this study, I was interested in the process of transformation toward the development of a critical consciousness about perceptions of CLED students. A critical consciousness or *conscientizacão* refers to the ability to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against contradictions, which serve to oppress (Freire, 1990). Put differently, a critical consciousness "permits one to respond to the socio-cultural realities that shape one's

circumstances by developing, in concert with others, interventions that interrupt forms of oppression and thus make available creative practices" (Britzman, 1991, p. 25). To begin, however, it is important to understand the sociocultural contexts from which one operates in order to recognize "how mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 15). As Nieto (1996) states, "learning to affirm differences rather than deny them is what a multicultural perspective is about" and there is a need to admit that differences can influence how we learn (p. 136). As a result, the social environment in which White special education teachers exist directly affects how teachers learn to learn, process information and form opinions about his or her world.

Conceptual Framework

> Knowledge is always mediated through the political positionings of the researcher. (Hatch, 2002, p. 17)

Since the emergence of qualitative methods (e. g., Naturalistic Inquiry in particular) in the 1980's as a viable mode for researching phenomena in education, more recently, the field has evolved by leaps and bounds over the last ten years (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000). Of particular importance is the recognition of positionality of the researcher, the lens from which the researcher will frame their study as a central theme, from which emanates "researcher as instrument" (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Positionality includes the nature of the research question(s) that guide the inquiry and shapes how the researcher conducts, analyzes, and represents the findings. A major current assumption in critical

qualitative inquiry is that individuals or, in this case, researchers operate within their epistemology (Hatch, 2002). Thus it is ethical to identify your working lens and assumptions upfront so that the readers as well as the research participants are aware of the assumptions that guide the research methods and findings. As such, I begin this section with a discussion of my positionality or conceptual framework that relates to the guiding paradigm and method of inquiry for this study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In critical theory studies, there is a conscious effort to "integrate theory and practice in such a way that individuals and groups become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their belief systems and social practices and are inspired to change those beliefs and practices" (Schwandt, 2002, p. 45). This is the initial grounding from which my study grew as the course, CCIMSE enacted elements of critical learning by exposing students to theory and practice that served to interrupt dominant notions of education by including perspectives from historically under-represented groups. As a result of the course, some students, who eventually became participants in my study, reported shifts in their thinking toward a critical consciousness about difference in education and expressed an interest in continuing their journey by shifting to become more culturally responsive educators.

Drawing on post-modern sensibilities, Weedon (1999) suggests that theory should be used as a tool for advancing social change by promoting varied perspectives of understanding phenomena. As such theory should not be viewed

as merely an academic exercise but a tool for unveiling multiple ways of knowing. For example "a key project of deconstructive theories is to denormalize and denaturalize commonsense categories, exposing them as socially constructed and maintained. In undercutting the given ness of received categories, deconstructive approaches tend to emphasize 'interrupting' over critiquing power relations" (Thompson, 2003, p. 20). Interruptions provide a temporary space for creating ways of understanding the phenomena from a new or innovative perspective (Thompson, 2003).

The literature on teacher preparation has portrayed White teachers for what they do not know, which can undermine our understanding of the multiple factors that influence what they believe about difference. As such White teachers are potentially to be Othered by multicultural experts (who have a specialized knowledge of difference) who view White teachers from a deficit perspective. White special education teachers do not exist outside of the social structures within which they have been socialized. If the dominant discourse in education serves to assimilate or normalize difference by pathologizing students who are not from the mainstream; then the questions really become: (a) how can teacher educators re-frame the discourse about what White teachers know so that White teachers are more aware of the power structures that influence their beliefs about difference in education and (b) how can teacher educators re-frame the dominant discourse in education so that White teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and beliefs to counter deficit thinking in education?

Another goal of critical theory studies is to reveal the types and extent of oppression that are currently being experienced by those being studied (Hatch, 2002).

> Its method here is immanent critique, which challenges belief systems and social relations not by comparing them to some set of external standards but by showing that these practices do not measure up to their own standards and are internally inconsistent, hypocritical, incoherent, and hence comprise false consciousness [thus motivating the emergence of a critical consciousness]. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 45)

As such this study promoted opportunities for discussion about the structures that enable those in power to maintain control through reification of hegemonic practices that potentially undermine the "abilities" of those dominantly underserved in education and to consider a variety of ways in which children are privileged and/or marginalized within education. Since the context of this study is special education, one of my interests was to maintain a critical perspective of "ability" as it relates and is pertinent to the constructs of race/ethnicity, economic class, gender, language dominance, culture, etc. The dominant discourse can serve to reify hegemony in education through such topics as "empirical-based" practices, "best" practices for teaching reading, and standards for education at the expense of children from CLED backgrounds, and serves to maintain White teachers as objects/pawns of the system. That White educators in particular become both the oppressed and the oppressor (Freire, 1990) when engaged in

"safe space" education that serves to reproduce systemic inequity and hegemony. As such this study served to learn more about White women's life experiences that have shaped what they believe about difference in education. We explored their life histories (e.g. schooling and home life experiences) as vehicles of socialization that shaped how they understand difference in relation to the dominant discourse on education.

Thus, an assumption of my research is that teachers in general are "well-meaning" (Betsinger, García, & Guerra, 2000) and want to do what is best for students but they are "the fish who cannot see the water." Meaning that teachers, particularly White female educators are products of their socialization, who are raised in white or dominant ways of knowing and thus normalize their experiences as truth rather than being able to see the cultural underpinnings of knowing, teaching, and learning that lead to privileging of some and marginalization of *others* (Hollins, 1996). Additionally, due to the nature of being raised in the dominant culture, White teachers are not accustomed to viewing themselves as racialized beings (Howard, 1999; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). The title of Howard's (1999) book about White teachers' experiences in a multiracial schools poignantly states, "We can't teach what we don't know." With this in mind, why is it that the literature in multicultural education continues to fault White teachers for what they don't know? Why not consider why White teachers believe what they do and in what ways they can develop a critical consciousness about the structural inequalities of education?

Omi & Winant (1994) in their discussion of racial formation in the United States, discuss the need to move away from essentializing race and believing that we can "get beyond" race toward thinking about "race as an element of social structure rather than as an irregularity within it; we should see race as a dimension of human representation rather than an illusion" (p. 55). Along this line of thinking, Gallagher (2000) suggests that:

> While whiteness is understood as a socially constructed category, the internal variation within this category is often leveled. Without acknowledging how culture, politics, geography, ideology, and economics come together to produce numerous versions of whiteness, researchers will continue to frame and define whiteness monolithically. (p. 76)

So it is essential to consider the intersections of race with other identities in order to understand the individual. In part, my study served to resist essentializing race by moving beyond the binary of what it means to be a White special education teacher in comparison to the culturally, linguistically, economically diverse children with which they teach. Meaning that simply being White does not necessarily constitute an ignorance of CLED students. Rather, I was interested in the complex ways in which teachers identities are shaped by their life histories, personal experiences, demographic background and looked deeper at the multiple identities and realities that shaped our perspectives from an emotional state, to personal and professional life experiences to teacher preparation experiences and beyond. Who we are as educators expands beyond

the four walls of the institution and we are shaped into educators by the complex interactions and/or tensions among the institutions and our experiences and roles in life.

In response to this critical understanding of how white women come to know or construct their understanding of difference given the contradictions and interruptions of identities and contexts, I wanted to embody a research perspective that simultaneously served to empower and [re]construct how white women develop a critical consciousness about difference. I turned to feminism as a guide to inform my method of inquiry. I wanted actively involve white women in the process of (a) unpacking their life stories and learnings from the course, (b) hearing each other's stories, and (c) drawing connections across their experiences to create collective understanding that centered on developing a critical consciousness about difference. I was led to Collaborative Inquiry, which has its' roots in feminism and participatory action research.

Collaborative Inquiry

Collaborative Inquiry is a qualitative methodology that became popularized by the Group for Collaborative Inquiry and thINQ. The Group for Collaborative Inquiry is a group of national female researchers from the field of adult education who to came "together to study learning, change, and social action" (Group for Collaborative Inquiry & thINQ, 1994, p. 57) and thINQ was a group of graduate students from Teacher College, Columbia University who participated in a dissertation study about Collaborative Inquiry. Collaborative Inquiry (CI) is a research method that promotes collaboration through out the

research process whereby all individuals in a research inquiry play the dual role of participant and researcher as they participate in all phases of a research project. It is "the systematic examination through dialogue of a body of data and lived experience by researchers whose intentions include the construction of formal knowledge that can contribute to theory" (Group for Collaborative Inquiry & thINQ, 1994, p. 58).

CENTRAL TENETS OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks (2000) state that the central tenets of CI include (a) no prescribed or formal set of procedures, (b) collaboration, and (c) reflection. CI has no set or prescribed procedure for conducting research because the focus is on collaboratively allowing the method to emerge as the research unfolds. As such, it is the questions and the philosophy that guides the research or provides the structure or framework while allowing the road map to finding the answers to unfold as individuals cycle through dialogic reflection. The consistent components of CI are "the repeated episodes of reflection and action, the notion of a group of inquirers who are truly peers, and the inquiry question" (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000, p. 7).

Collaborative Inquiry is a tool for collaboratively recognizing and understanding the imbalance, or disequilibrium that an individual has experienced that has been spurred on by a complex inner struggle. The motivation "may be inwardly centered on a not fully formulated need for exploration into one's private sense of being. This disquiet can be around an intellectual question or rooted in the problems of life." (Bray, Lee, Smith, and Yorks, 2000,p. 52). In this case, the

"disquiet" was to explore our collective perceptions about culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse learners in special education. Collaboration is integral in the conceptualization though the analysis of the research inquiry. Within this study, all participants expressed an interest in learning more about their transformative learning experience as a result of their engagements in a course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions In Multicultural Special Education,* and in gaining a deeper understanding of how their life histories influence their perceptions about CLED learners in special education. As well, participants were actively involved in reviewing transcripts and thematizing data (Brooks, 2003).

CI has its roots in human inquiry where the focus is to *do research with people rather than doing research on people* (Heron, 1996). It is essential that personal experience of each member in a CI be divulged as it relates to the inquiry at hand whereby "simultaneously, each participant is a co-subject – drawing on personal experience from inside and outside of the inquiry group to provide a collective pool of experience and insight for analysis and creating meaning" (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000, p. 7). Similarly, Hatch (2002) states that collaborative studies find it "valuable to bring both insider and outsider perspectives to the analysis of phenomena under investigation" (p. 32). As well, the collaborative component of this research method addresses the concern of authenticity and reciprocity because each individual in the study has an active contribution throughout the research process (Hatch, 2002). In this case, we interacted collaboratively by reflecting and sharing aspects of our life stories and the course,

CCIMSE that served to construct and [re]construct our understanding of difference in education.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to actively involve White women in the process of critically investigating our life histories as it related to our understanding of difference in education (e.g., race/ethnicity, socio-economic class, ability, etc.) and identify factors that influenced a shift in our thinking about difference as a result of taking a Master's level course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions In Multicultural Special Education*. In response to the pervasive disproportionate representation of CLED students in special education, the need to infuse multicultural perspectives in special education teacher preparation programs has been well documented (e. g., Pugach & Seidl, 1998; Townsend, 2002; Obiakor, 1999). However, the literature documenting the effects of multicultural centered coursework in special education has often centered on what White teachers believe about difference and often leads to extensive discussions of teachers continued deficit beliefs about CLED students (e. g., Cuccaro, Wright, Harry, & Rownd, 1996; Lamorey, 2002).

Rather my study served to examine *why* White women believe what they do about difference in education, which entailed a critical examination of our life histories that presented complex and often competing discourses on difference. Employing collaborative inquiry, we investigated our life histories to understand how we (White women in education) construct and re-construct our understanding of difference in education, particularly related to race/ethnicity, language, social class, and ability, as a result of our engagements with the course and our broader

life experiences. In particular our attempt was to pinpoint (a) aspects of the course that influenced our changed perspective about difference and (b) aspects of each woman's life experience that shape her understanding of difference.

Research Methodology

As part of my search for answers to the above questions, I used a combination of qualitative methods. I used surveys, individual interviews, written reflection, and collaborative inquiry to actively engage White women in a critical discussion/reflection about our life stories and experience in the course, to recognize what influenced our understanding of difference in education, particularly related to race/ethnicity, language, social class, and ability. Collaborative inquiry (CI) has its roots in participatory action research, which emphasizes active involvement of participants throughout the research process to include data analysis (Kasl & York, 2002). In particular, CI promotes doing research *with* participants rather than *on* or *about* participants. As such I chose to actively engage as a participant in my study and provided opportunities for participants to collaborate in methodological decisions about procedure and data analysis. CI is a qualitative method of inquiry that involves a group desire to inquire about a phenomenon through dialogue (Bray, Lee, Smith & York, 2000). In this study the phenomenon was the experiences that influenced our understanding of difference in education. CI is research based on personal experience not necessarily as an action for social change but to understand the lived change experienced by participants of the inquiry (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000). As such, the lived change experienced by participants in this study

will be how we understand difference in education in relation to our life histories and experience in a Master's level course, *Cross-cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education*.

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at a large research one university in the Southwest. Due to the growing diversity in education more generally and the continued disproportionate representation of CLED learners in special education, Special Education Master's students are encouraged to take a course that addresses multicultural issues within the context of education. *Cross-cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education* (which will be referred to as *the course or CCIMSE*) is one of two courses that fulfill this recommendation. As a Teaching Assistant for this course, I observed many students express how this course changed their perspective about difference in education through whole group discussion, reflective journals, personal email, and informal conversation. I was more interested in understanding which aspects of the course and their previous life experiences facilitated this shift and how teacher preparation programs can better serve teachers who are evolving in their understanding of difference. Additionally, I chose students from this course because it is a process-oriented course that uses dialogue (e. g., reflective journals, cooperative learning discussions) as a primary tool for facilitating learning about difference in education as it relates to students incoming knowledge of difference. As stated on page 2 of the syllabus (Appendix A):

> "The primary goal of the course is to promote the development of your cross-cultural communication skills by increasing your knowledge of basic principles of intercultural communication and by providing a non-judgmental, non-threatening environment in which to experience the process. A variety of approaches, including class lectures, discussions, simulations, training exercises and student assignments, will be utilized to achieve course objectives."

PILOT STUDY

To explore the feasibility of my study and narrow the focus of what I wanted to understand about White teachers' experiences and understanding of difference in education; I conducted a pilot study with three White special education Master's students who were enrolled in the course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education*. To select participants, I analyzed final reflection journals from the course for those who self-identified a shift in thinking about difference in education. As part of the pilot study, I used a variety of data collection techniques to gain a better understanding of what I was trying to investigate. I reviewed a belief survey they had completed at the beginning of the course and re-administered this belief survey (see Appendix B) to examine possible shifts in thinking. I administered a demographic survey (see Appendix C) to learn more about their experiences growing up, which also served as a source

for developing interview questions. Then I conducted individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for sample interview questions) to explore how the course impacted their beliefs and understanding of difference and in what way their life histories shaped their perspectives.

Learning

Analysis of the pre-post belief survey did not necessarily reveal dramatic shifts in their responses to the survey but served as a source for discussion during the interview. As I conducted the individual interviews, participants expressed an interest in continuing the conversation we started and were open to talking with other students from the course. In the fall 2004, I took Directed Research with Dr. Annie Brooks, to help me sort through the methods and initial impressions from the pilot study. As I debriefed with Dr. Brooks about the participants' desire to continue their journey toward understanding and re-framing difference in education, she suggested I read more about Collaborative Inquiry. In conducting the individual interviews I realized the importance of developing a rapport with the participants as they became more open toward the end of the interview and expressed interest in talking again. During the interviews I recognized the power of sharing personal stories as a method of evoking more dialogue about how we perceive difference. This led me to think about the potential of gathering a group of students from the course to collaboratively discuss their experiences as a method of learning from each other.

To expand on this study and ensure the phenomenon was not limited to particular students who were enrolled in the Spring 2003 course, I invited students from Fall 2003 to see if they had a similar experience and willingness to share together. This allowed me to explore across semesters, with a different cohort of students. Since course enrollments vary by semester, even in terms of students' program specialization, this gave me a broader range of participants (e.g., vocational rehabilitation majors, and pre-service as well as practicing teachers).

Participant Selection

To begin, there were a total of seven White women (myself included) selected to participate in my study. However due to time commitments of the collaborative inquires one participant dropped from the study. In selecting participants for the study, I used a combination of unique, purposeful sampling, maximum variation and convenience sampling (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1999).

UNIQUE PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING

Unique purposeful sampling is "based on unique, atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest" (Merriam, 1999, p. 62). In this case, the unique characteristics of the participants in this study are that they: (a) were White women (b) had taken *Cross-Cultural Interactions In Multicultural Special Education,* (c) expressed a shift in thinking about difference in their final reflection journals, and (d) expressed a willingness to think critically about the educational system and a desire to work toward change. I chose White women because they are the most prevalent in the education field and there has been concern about the cultural incongruence between White teachers and the

culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse learners they serve (García & McCray, 2002; Obiakor, 1999, Ladson-Billings, 2001).

I selected White women who were enrolled in a Master's course, *Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education* because the underlying framework of this course serves to transform teachers' awareness, knowledge, skills and beliefs by using a process-oriented approach (see Appendix A). The course uses reflective journaling as a dialogic exercise with the course instructor to process through what students are learning and how they are internalizing the information. The primary purpose of this course is to illuminate the socio-cultural contexts of teaching and learning and to assist special education pre-service teachers in responsively serving students from CLED backgrounds within special education.

I selected White women who self-identified a shift in their understanding of difference because I wanted to learn more about what works to shift White women's understanding of difference in education. I selected participants by reviewing final journals from the course to identify White women who reported a shift in their understanding about difference in education. For example, Jennifer stated, " I think of so many things differently after this semester" and listed specific examples from the course including, "importance of honoring diversity" and "how to recognize the inequities that are the undercurrent of our society and are reflected in our [educational curriculum] materials."

Finally I identified participants who expressed an interest in thinking critically and working toward change during initial face-to-face contact with them.

I gave an overview of the study to ensure, that participants had (a) the willingness to think critically about the educational system and (b) the desire to become agents for social change[3] (more in the sense of being reflexive about their practice and infusing aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy). Since collaborative inquiry requires that each participant have a similar agenda for participating, I required this foundational commitment (Group for Collaborative Inquiry & thINQ, 1994).

MAXIMUM VARIATION SAMPLING

Maximum variation sampling refers to selection of participants based on various representations of the phenomena (Merriam, 1999). I selected participants who represented a variety of perspectives about difference in education as well as a variety of understandings about their shifts in thinking about difference. For example, some participants were struggling with personal stereotyped understandings of difference, while others were grappling with how to change the system. As well, one participant talked about how she had been exposed to most of the material in previous diversity training while other participants expressed that this was the first time they had actively engaged with diverse perspectives and inequity in schools.

Additionally I selected participants (with the exception of myself) who had been enrolled in either the Spring 2003 or Fall 2003 course. I chose the Spring 2003 enrollees because I was the Teaching Assistant during that semester and

[3] An agent of social change entails a variety of manifestations from critiquing and dialoguing about structural inequalities in education to utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy that counters hegemony within the classroom.

became familiar with the course content and students. I chose the Fall 2004 enrollees to expand the perspectives and bring together with the Spring 2003 group. Since I had experience with the Spring group, I wanted to explore my relationship with them as a potential influencing factor on the conversation or narratives revealed and that it was not the specific semester that created the phenomena.

CONVENIENCE SAMPLING

Convenience sampling is the premise of selecting participants based on availability and interest (Merriam, 1999). I used convenience sampling to narrow my subject pool in that those who were interested and available for the study became candidates for the inquiry. I contacted potential participants by email and telephone to invite them to volunteer to participate in the study (for email see Appendix E). Initially I had selected eight potential candidates, which was narrowed to six based on availability to participate in the initial individual interview. After the six individual interviews had been conducted and transcribed, one participant dropped out of the study because she was getting married during the timeframe of the collaborative inquiry scheduling. However, she gave me permission to include her data as part of my final analysis related to the factors of the course that impacted a shift in thinking about difference. As a result, there were three White women from the Fall 2003 semester; two from the Spring 2003 semester and myself who had take the course in the summer of 2002, for a total of six participants.

Data Collection

Data collection for this project involved five phases that included a variety of data collection methods. The phases included collection of survey data, individual interviews, and two collaborative inquires. A detailed account in provided below.

PHASE ONE

For the first phase of data collection I met with the instructor of the course to discuss potential participants and gather contact information. Then I emailed potential participants and met with them individually to discuss the study. Some participants met me on campus face-to-face while I met others over the telephone. For those whom I met over the phone I sent the consent form electronically and they mailed the signed consent back to me. During this phase of the study, I also gathered relevant assignments from CCIMSE to include a pre-survey on teacher beliefs taken as part of an icebreaker activity at the beginning of the course and final reflective journals completed at the end of the course, which revealed the impact of the course overall.

PHASE TWO

In phase two of data collection I conducted a post-survey on teacher beliefs and a demographic survey (See Appendix for copies of the surveys). The teacher belief survey is an adapted version from the Organizing for Diversity Project (Betsinger, García, & Guerra, 2000). The survey consisted of 10 open-ended true/false questions that state common myths/misconceptions teachers have

about CLED students. Participants were asked to rate whether the statement is true or false then to explain their answer. Responses to these questions were used to structure interview questions and assisted in delving deeper into their understanding of difference in education. The demographic survey is also an adapted tool from the Organizing for Diversity Project, which I used to collect background information on their experiences growing up to include their economic status, exposure to diverse populations, their educational experiences, etc. I used responses from both surveys to guide my initial interview questions.

PHASE THREE

During phase three, I conducted one individual interview with each participant that lasted between one to two hours. I audiotaped and transcribed all interviews. The variation of interview time occurred for a variety of reasons. Some participants elaborated more on questions while others were brief in their responses. With one participant, I spent time answering questions she had related to full inclusion because she had just been hired as a special education teacher. The primary purpose of the interview was to (a) introduce them to the study, (b) establish a rapport and build trust, (c) give them an opportunity to begin to unpack their life story in a one-on-one setting, and (d) explore aspects of the course that resulted in a shift in their thinking. As part of this interview, I reviewed items from the surveys to clarify information and learn more about their beliefs. The main purpose of the interview was to establish rapport since we would be collaboratively discussing potentially sensitive topics around our beliefs of difference. Additionally the interview was the primary data source for learning

about aspects from the course that facilitated a shift in their thinking. I thematized the Data gathered on the course from each interview and during the second collaborative inquiry, we analyzed further (See data analysis for a more detailed discussion).

PHASE FOUR

In phase four of data collection occurred in the Fall of 2004 nearly one year after participants had been engaged in the course. During this phase, I conducted the first collaborative inquiry in which we took turns sharing our life stories as they relate to our understanding of difference. I began by sending participants a packet that included a copy of their signed consent, final reflective journal, demographic and belief surveys, and transcripts from the individual interview. My intent was to give them an opportunity to give feedback on accuracy and impressions and to assist them in deciding what to share during the first collaborative inquiry. We met for the first collaborative inquiry, which lasted about six hours. Participants came to my home for a Saturday afternoon from 11-5pm where lunch was provided. The inquiry took place in the living room with participants taking turns sitting on the couch with two other participants to share their life story as it related to their understanding of difference. Two video cameras were set up at either end of the room so participants sat in a semi-circle in order to be filmed by one of the two video cameras. Participant stories ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. Before participants began, I reminded participants of the intent of the inquiry and gave them a prompt to help them begin (See Appendix F). For example, in speaking with Caroline I said,

> *What I'd like you to do is start off by telling us your name and then I want you to share your life experiences and how that shaped what you believe about differences. And you can talk about difference in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, mobility, whatever; —anything that's different from your own experiences. And also, you can share in chronological order from being raised, you could categorize it by family or school or education or teaching, whatever. Those experiences that have shaped what you believe.*

Participants were given 45 minutes to speak and I used a timer to monitor the sharing. In the interest of time, I went last to ensure that participants had an opportunity to share their story. I also decided to go last because I did not want to influence or guide how the participants shared their stories. At the end of the first inquiry I sent participants a set of reflection questions to assist in beginning to analyze the data (see Appendix G).

PHASE FIVE

For phase five I conducted the second collaborative inquiry, which focused on member checking and analysis of the data. Video and audiotape was used to record the sharing of our findings. Since this phase involved more data analysis than generation of new data, a more detailed discussion is provided in the next section.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved two processes, a collaborative component in which participants were actively involved in thematizing the data and my personal journey with the data throughout the research process.

OUR COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY WITH THE DATA

In following collaborative inquiry method, participants were actively involved in analyzing the data (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000). The second collaborative inquiry served as both a member check and provided an opportunity for the participants to identify major themes or impressions of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hatch, 2002). I began with an overview of the day. The agenda included (a) self discovery & clarification, (b) sharing & exploring, (c) validating our understandings, and (d) final remarks (see Appendix H for researcher's detailed agenda). Participants brought their data to include final reflective journal, demographic survey, and the individual interview transcript and were given copies of the story they shared and responses to reflection questions from the first collaborative inquiry. During self-discovery and clarification I prompted participants as follows:

1. Start by reviewing your data from the individual interview and collaborative inquiry #1. Outline your story making major ideas as headers with key points underneath. The purpose of this exercise is to clarify any points you feel are especially important, to add to the data as you feel necessary, and to cut or cross off information

you feel is not important. It also serves as a member check to be sure you are being understood as you intended to be heard.

2. Highlight what about the course with Dr. Morales[4] influenced a shift in your thinking.

3. Highlight the life experiences that you believe shaped your understanding of difference today.

This exercise gave participants an opportunity to clarify any points in the data they felt were especially important, add to the data as they felt necessary, and cut or cross off information they felt was not important. It also served as a member check to ensure participants were being understood as they intended to be heard. In following qualitative technique, we used a variety of open coding techniques to include line by line analysis, sentence or paragraph analysis, and whole document/interview analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We used highlighters to code themes and wrote notes in the right side margin of our transcripts to clarify data and expand on ideas related to our understanding of difference. Participants were also given spiral notebooks to maintain ideas.

Then each participant represented her story on 8 x 12 post-it notes. Some used graphic organizers while others were more descriptive in nature. After participants had an opportunity to review and represent their data, we took turns sharing what we had developed. I asked questions to promote a cross-case

[4] Pseudonym given to the instructor of CCIMSE

analysis and some initial themes emerged. However, due to time we did not have an opportunity to conduct a full cross-case analysis and participants agreed to allow me to develop these overarching themes.

As a result, the second inquiry became a critical process of clarifying and ensuring the data represented what they intended to share about their understanding of difference. Initially, I had intended to have participants review each other's data to develop themes but after the first inquiry participants had expressed that they didn't feel they had really answered the research question in the telling of their story. So we focused on examining our own transcripts to develop what we understood to be key factors about our life stories that shape what we believe about difference. The process served to heighten our awareness of what shaped our beliefs about difference and assisted in developing themes within each life history.

After each participant shared their findings, we collaboratively reviewed the themes I generated from the interviews related to aspects of the course that facilitated a shift in our thinking about difference in education. Each participant was given the opportunity to comment on the theme through a consensus type voting and was encouraged to change or add to the theme.

After the second inquiry I sent each participant a set of reflection questions to assist in further analysis and give feedback on the methodology (see Appendix I). Included in the final reflection was a summary of themes from the course. I then, revisited the data to include participants' analysis to create portraits of participants and further develop overarching themes of aspects from

our life stories that shaped how we understand difference in education and aspects from the course that facilitated shift in our thinking about difference.

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY WITH THE DATA

> "Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding" (Hatch, 2000, p. 148).

To maintain alignment with qualitative methods, I followed a routine for discovering themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000; Patton, 1990). I consistently dialogued with my data by asking questions of myself, reflecting on findings, and dialoguing with others about the findings. Immediately following each interview, I recorded my impressions in a journal and reflected on what I thought to be (a) key findings, (b) information that was the least informative and why, and (c) surprising information (Brooks, personal communication, September 16, 2003). After the interviews were transcribed, I revisited my journal reflections to confirm or disconfirm my impressions of the interviews and recorded new impressions.

After each inquiry I responded to the reflection questions given to participants and kept a reflective memoir of my thoughts (see Appendix J for my responses).

Hatch (2000) states, "I conceptualize the general data analysis process as asking questions of data. What kinds of questions are asked is related to what kind of research is being done within what set of paradigmatic assumptions" (p. 148). In following critical/feminism, as I reviewed the collaborative analysis of the data, I continued to dialogue with the data by asking questions to recognize the multiple discourses that shaped our understanding of difference while simultaneously examining how narratives shaped or place boundaries around how we story difference. For example, in what ways are we reproducing or interrupting our white identity? How are our life histories shaping our understanding of difference and in what way are we using narrative to story our understanding of difference?

TRIANGULATION AND DATA SATURATION

In an effort to triangulate the data and reach data saturation, I collected data from multiple sources to include the collaborative inquiry, responses to reflection questions, interview, survey, and journals (Glesne, 1999). Before the individual interview, I analyzed the pre-post belief surveys and final reflective journals from the course to determine any shifts in thinking and used this data long with the completed demographic survey to guide interview questions. Individual interviews focused on a narrative telling of their demographic background as well as a reiteration of how the course impacted them. As part of data saturation, each participant was given their completed surveys, final reflective journal, and a

transcript of their interview to assist in deciding the how they shaped their life story as it relates to their understanding of difference. After each inquiry participants were given reflective questions to respond to their experience and pinpoint themes across the data. As part of triangulation and data saturation, the second inquiry focused on thematizing and re-telling our life stories to center on how we understand difference.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

In the mid-80's, Lincoln & Guba addressed trustworthiness from a post-positivist perspective in an effort to maintain integrity of qualitative research as compared with quantitative research. In doing so, they suggested that trustworthiness be demonstrated through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Schwandt, 2001). However, the current trend in qualitative is to consider trustworthiness from the vantage of representation or authenticity, the way in which the findings reveal the reality of the individuals being studied (Hatch, 2002). For the purposes of my study, I address trustworthiness in two ways (a) representation/authenticity of participants' story and (b) reflexivity of my bias by examining my own position and story, which I believe influenced my interaction with and interpretation of the data.

The nature of collaborative inquiry is emancipatory because it actively involves participants in the collection, analysis, and composition of findings. As such, there is almost a natural authenticity feature built in because participants are co-constructing meaning of the data and reflecting on meaning making throughout

the process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; McIntyre, 1997). "The meaning making process involves interpretation, analysis, reflection, and contemplation" (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, p. 88). Participants were actively involved in this process of meaning making through reviewing and analyzing raw data as well as reviewing the data as I wrote it up. For example, each participant was sent her portrait to give me feedback.

As discussed earlier, authenticity may be at risk for socially desirable responses. However from a critical perspective are any responses truly authentic or are they all constructs of a particular situation? On the other hand, Pajares (1992) who conducted a literature review of teacher beliefs in educational research suggests that "additional measures such as open-ended interviews, response to dilemmas and vignettes, and observation of behavior must be included if richer and more accurate inferences are to be made" (p. 327). Pajares also warns that teachers may provide socially desirable responses so it is important to collect multiple forms of data to triangulate beliefs. I employed this method of multiple data collection. Drawing from the logic of needing multiple data sources to capture the consistency of beliefs, I conducted a demographic survey, a belief survey, examined final journals, and conducted open-ended interviews. I then, conducted two collaborative inquiries that served to gather more information on their life histories and assist in data analysis. After each collaborative inquiry, I followed up by email with participants and they submitted written responses to reflection questions to follow-up on the process. To ensure authenticity of representation, I conducted member checks with each participant by asking them

to review and confirm "accuracy" of transcripts and themes as well as provide their own analysis of the data and give feedback on the final written product (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In an effort to recognize my own bias, as McIntyre (1997) suggests, I maintained a series of self-reflexive journals to record the ways in which my perspective served to interrupt the data collection, analysis, and findings. First, my role as researcher with a social activist agenda shaped the nature of my questioning and the topics I choose to attend. Second, my White female identity shaped the potential "insider" perspective I had in responding to participants and interpreting the data. However in becoming a participant of the study by sharing my life story, I found myself needing to stay grounded as a researcher because I became emotional as I heard other's stories. For example, while one of the participants, Kimberly shared her story; I became angry because she experienced a privilege I did not:

> *God I just wanted to cry as I heard Kimberly talking as it validated the feelings I felt growing up…I sensed her privilege, her security wishing I had had those choices and feeling like I could never have those choices.* (11/21/04 Reflection)

I did not want to create a distance between us so on the outside; I tried to remain neutral while inside I did not feel neutral. I tried to remain present as a participant during the inquiries so as to not impose my perspective but to provide a true collaboration. Finally, having experienced marginalization as a young child

living in poverty with a single mother, I worked not to taint my findings in my zeal for social change by creating portraits of participants as they entered the study. I asked participants to review their portraits and the final product to be sure I was representing them how they intended to be heard. Because this study is such a part of my core existence, it was especially important not to guide my participants' responses to match my own thinking but rather to allow the findings to emerge and then go back and add my personal narrative.

Utility of Findings

At the forefront, this study represents an attempt to shift the center away from teacher's deficit beliefs toward complex understanding of *why* White women believe what they do about difference. As such, the goal is to move away from blaming White women toward understanding how they are enacting different ideologies and beliefs about difference in education or CLED students according to the power structures of rhetoric of special education, teacher preparation training, personal life experiences, multiple identities that they embody such as race, class, gender, education, etc. What do they inhabit? Pushing against to create new ideas or new spaces? How are they negotiating their identities with in the structures of schooling? This study is designed to 'interrupt' the traditional discourse about white teachers by deconstructing what they believe about difference in education as it relates to the competing discourses in education on difference, their experiences growing up White, and the multiple identities they embody beyond their Whiteness.

Simultaneously this study served to provide a polyvocal understanding of what White women identify as critical factors related to their life experiences and the course content that served to potentially transform their understanding of difference. Such an understanding might provide insight on how to approach teacher preparation for White women in their journey toward a critical understanding of difference. While participants identified aspects of the course that were instrumental in our understanding of difference, this study was not intended to be an evaluation of the course.

RECOGNIZING BOUNDARIES

The purpose is not to produce generalizable results, but to study the phenomenon in depth. However, readers can determine the extent to which findings are transferable to other settings based on the relevance of these findings to their contexts. As such, I recognize the boundaries of my study. First, the findings are not be representative of all White women's' experience or even all participants of the course but are merely representations of the group who participated in this study. Also, this study is limited to white women, which does not address non-white teachers who may hold similar perspectives due to their socialization/acculturation in the dominant cultureTo give the reader an understanding of the variation of experiences across participants, chapter four provides portraits of each participant as they entered the study to include my first impression and how we came to know each other, an account of the shift reported in her final journal, and a brief overview of her demographic background. Chapter five provides a detailed overview of the themes discovered related to (a)

aspects of the course that facilitated a shift in our thinking about difference and (b) aspects of our life stories that shape our understanding of difference in education. Chapter six is the concluding chapter in which I take the opportunity to provide a polyvocal reflection that includes participant voices on method, implications, and future directions.

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CHAPTER 4: PORTRAITS

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce each participant, myself included as we entered the collaborative life history. I include my own portrait in this section to recognize my position as a participant-researcher in this process. Because my study explores our life histories and how the act of sharing life history helps to [re] shape what we understand about difference; the portraits below are merely brief glimpses into the lives of each participant, as I knew them when they entered my study. This is to assist the reader in understanding whom each participant was when she arrived for the collaborative life history. The information draws on final journal entries from the course, the demographic survey, and individual interview data. My story on the other hand draws on data from my reflection journal as well as stories I shared during individual interviews with my participants. In addition my intent is to expose you to their voices, so I rely heavily on quotes without much interpretation. In the chapters that follow I will offer more interpretation but I begin here with their stories as they were relayed to me.

I begin each portrait with an account of how I came to know the participant and what I had known about their experience in CCIMSE. As stated in the methodology section, each participant came to my study as a result of a self-reported shift in her understanding of difference. Below, I reveal the shift they reported as a result of the course. From there, I present information gathered on each participant from their demographic survey and individual interview so as

to unfold the data as I gathered it and help bring context to the shifts reported in their final journals. My intent is to take the reader through the same journey I experienced with my participants.

All participants were white women who had taught or were currently teaching in Special Education. Only one participant, Renee, had limited teaching experience as she substitute taught at a high school for four months in all areas of education. Of the six participants, myself included, three were born and raised in Texas while the other two only came to Texas for graduate school. As Master's students in the CCIMSE course, two participants majored in Vocational Rehabilitation, two majored in Multicultural Special Education, one majored in Severe and Multiple Disabilities, and one was a doctoral student in Multicultural Special Education.

Each participant came to this study with unique and varying experiences that influenced the ways in which CCIMSE had shifted their understanding of difference. Prior to the course, one participant primarily engaged in White environments and had never really thought about how difference (e.g. race, ethnicity, class, language dominance) influences our interactions and educational practices with students. In addition to having relationships with racially, linguistically, and economically diverse friends, three participants came to the course with prior diversity-related training. While two of the participants did not have formal diversity-related training, they had experiences growing up in diverse settings and relationships with racially and economically diverse friends.

Portrait #1: Caroline

COMING INTO THE STUDY…

Caroline and I first met in the Spring 2003 CCIMSE course, as I was the TA for that semester. Caroline entered class admittedly having a difficult time understanding and working with culturally, linguistically and economically diverse learners due to negative experiences she had working at Booker Middle School. She had worked as a Special Education teacher at Booker, which is an urban middle school that primarily serves African American and Hispanic students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Her Educational Assistant was African American and so were many of the teachers at her school. She found the experience to be very negative and blamed the educational failure and her inability to develop relationships with the students and their families on their home life and upbringing. In class, she shared experiences she had with "reverse discrimination" in which her fellow teachers and parents who were African American were "rude" and "unfriendly" to her because she was White.

> *I was used to being liked right away, and making friends with everybody, at Booker [pseudonym], I had to work at because no one trusted me right away. I do feel that it is because I was white, and that bothered me because I was born this way and cannot change who I am or what I look like*. (FJE[5], S201[6], p. 1)

[5] FJE is an abbreviation for Final Journal Entry, which is a data source that was gathered from each participant at the end of the CCIMSE course.

Caroline entered class believing she would never teach again because she was unmotivated by the negative experiences she had had at Booker. As a result, in addition to working on her Master's in severe and multiple disabilities she was working on her diagnostician certificate. She thought that working one-on-one with students would be more manageable and enjoyable for her. By the end of the CCIMSE course, Caroline began to consider entering teaching again.

> *I think this class had really opened my mind and caused me to really look at my past experiences and I feel better about going into the school district as an employee now. I am not going to say I will [n]ever teach again, but the fact that I have even entertained the idea of working for a school district shows me that I am coming to terms with what I went through [at Booker] and starting to realize not all teaching and working experiences will be like that*. (FJE, S201, p. 2)

> *And that class I guess kind of showed me like another way of looking at [sigh] what I went through and the way I was treated. And so, looking at it from, instead of you know the defensive like me, poor me! I was looking at it from their side too and their experiences that they probably had their whole lives. And that's you know of course shaped who they are and*

[6] S201 denotes the participant code.

how they reacted to me. And so once I kind of saw that it kind of made things a whole lot better. You know, just to the point where I can think about going back to teaching you know this year. (II[7], S201, p. 8)

QUALIFYING FOR THE STUDY: CAROLINE'S INITIAL TRANSFORMATION

In her final journal entry, Caroline had reported many examples of how she had shifted during the CCIMSE course. In general she felt the course helped her to become a better educational professional and a better person because she was able to see things from multiple perspectives and refrain from judgment prior to getting to know others.

> *I cannot even begin to explain how much I have learned throughout the semester. Many times it has been difficult for me to let go of my previously held beliefs, but I know that I have grown through listening to other people's views and challenging what I have always thought about*. (FJE, S201, p. 1)

> *I will never be black or know what it is like to be them. I am me. But, I have learned both through past experience and through your class how to be a better me. I have noticed I am*

[7] II denotes Individual Interview data source.

a lot less critical. I used to judge people pretty quickly and I have noticed I am a lot more accepting of people and their differing points of view. (FJE, S201, p. 1-2)

I feel as I get out into the workforce as an educational diagnostician, I will be better because of this class. Although this class has been uncomfortable for me several times over the semester, I realize real growth and learning do not come with out a lot of challenging work and I had to take a good look at myself and who I was and how I could become a better me. (FJE, S201, p. 2-3)

Additionally, Caroline noted that she hoped to continue to grow.

I feel that my learning and evolving into a person that is alert and open to all cultures and all learners will not stop here. The information I have learned from you and your class has prepared me to be open to all ideas and all types of people. Learning is a lifelong process and I will not stop learning about the world and all it has to offer when I graduate. (FJE, S201, p. 3)

On the last day of class, Dr. Morales had the students sit in a circle and one by one students shared what they had learned from the course. Caroline adamantly suggested that this course, CCIMSE or one like it needed to be required of all teachers.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON CAROLINE

Caroline was raised in a primarily white upper middle class neighborhood in Dallas, TX. Her early schooling years in elementary school were primarily White and students of color were from the same socio-economic status.

> *…everyone around was White for the most part and things like that. So I never really had experiences [pause] with [pause] you know different [pause] cultures and that kind of thing.*
>
> *When I was younger and stuff like, I don't really remember going into school and noticing…you know I mean, it's not that I did not have friends that were black or I didn't have friends that were Hispanic. It's just that they were on the same, I guess um like SES level that my family was on. So…you know what I am saying like that doesn't, it doesn't make a difference. You know I mean it's the same.* (II, s201, p. 1)

Caroline grew up on a major thoroughfare that stretched across race and class lines, so her schooling in junior high and high school included students from

racially and economically diverse backgrounds. Her high school had a reputation of being "rough." She really did not begin to see difference until junior high school.

> *Yeah like in junior high like you know I guess is when I started noticing differences between um, me and classmates and stuff like that and then. In high school [sigh] it was even more to where I was a minority, um you know most of the school was black, Hispanic, um there were you know of course Asians and Whites but not nearly as many as there were [Black and Hispanic]…* (II, s201, p. 2)

While her later schooling experiences included students from diverse backgrounds Caroline's friends remained White.

> *I mean my friends in in Junior High [pause for a moment to think] yeah, they were all [pause] White. Except for one that was Italian…Italian American [but] everyone basically thought she was [Hispanic], like everyone would try to talk Spanish to her and stuff like she [had] dark skin*. (II, S201, p. 2)

> *And then in high school I guess I was um, you know same type things, like you know of course I had a diverse group of friends because I went to a school that was very diverse but still I would say my core close friends were probably White, you*

know. And um, I guess like it it wasn't ever really a big deal to me. I never really thought about it. (II, S201, p. 3)

Caroline was in the honors track and involved in cheerleading and choir. She went on to receive her Bachelor's in Special Education from Texas A & M, a primarily conservative White university. Caroline's first teaching job was in a rural elementary school that primarily served students from low SES backgrounds; she taught at a Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD). Her students ranged in age from 3-6 years old and had more "profound" disabilities. Her students were from Hispanic, Black and White backgrounds and ranged from below the poverty line to middle class backgrounds.

My kids were of all different races and shapes and sizes and you know families and SES and um everything was different with all of them. But um I was still able to get along fine with their families and um you know interact with the kids just fine and you know I had a great year. (II, S201, p. 3)

She left Bastrop because the school was closed down for toxic mold and was hired as a life skills teacher at Booker Middle School in Austin, TX. She became interested in the position because she lived in Austin and a close friend worked as a special education teacher at the school. Her students at Booker were thirteen and fourteen year olds that were classified as severely mentally retarded with a cognitive functioning level at two and half to three year old. Many of her

students could not read or write. The etiology of the students' conditions ranged from Traumatic Brain Injury and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome to genetic causes for their disability. The principal who hired Caroline encouraged her to develop her own curriculum for the students.

> *And so what she [the principal] told me when I went in and interviewed, is she said I want you to write your own curriculum, you know what are some things that you think are important for you know children that are, for you know you know thirteen and fourteen year olds that are really disabled. What do you think is important for them to learn? And so you know I listed off things you know of course like daily living skills, you know safety, um community, you know leisure activities all of this stuff. And so she basically said okay. I want you to focus on these you know six-eight subjects and just make your own curriculum.* (II, S201, p. 5)

As a result, Caroline spent most of the summer developing a life skills curriculum for her students that infused community activities. Her teaching experience at Booker began to go downhill when she returned to begin her year to find the principal had left and a new principal was hired. The new principal was an African American Women from California. Caroline met with the new principal, who was not pleased with what Caroline had created.

C: Then I come in and um we have a new principal, and she was um an African American woman from California. And she'd never been a principal of a Junior High and so she had very elementary ideas of about what I should be teaching my children, and even…

B: What do you mean by elementary?

C: She wasn't, I, I don't want to say she wasn't open minded cause I don't want to talk bad about her, I don't know that she wasn't but she wasn't open to the ideas that I had…made. She wasn't open to that curriculum. She wanted the kids to learn like the core subjects. She'd never really had an experience with special ed and kind of figured you know a resource classroom is kind of the same thing as life skills you know and…

She wanted me to teach 7th grade material to these 6-8th graders and make them understand it when I had two kids, three kids that couldn't even read. That could not read. (II, S201, p. 5)

As she began to pick up the pieces and combine what she had developed with what the new principal wanted Caroline to teach, a conflict ensued between her and her educational assistant (EA).

> *And, so you know, I showed her[the new principal] the curriculum I'd written and we'd…she basically threw it away. And so, [sigh] I don't know I mean [sounding distraught] I guess that was my first thing. Um me and my aide had a lot of trouble in the beginning. Um well she was African American also and she would like sit there and write in a journal like right in front of me taking notes on like* EVERYTHING *I did. And [laughing] I was just like what are you doing you know I'm teaching these children what the principal wants them to learn and your sitting there taking notes on me the whole time?* (II, S201, p. 6)

Caroline was frustrated because it was affecting her ability to teach and she wanted her EA to help with teaching her students. As a result, Caroline and her EA went into mediation with the principal. During mediation the EA stated that she was taking notes on Caroline's teaching practice because she wanted to go back to school. Caroline suggested that actually teaching would lead to more learning than simply taking notes on her practice. The mediation seemed to help

but there was always an undercurrent of tension between them as the year progressed.

> *C: you know my curriculum was taken away my aide and I did not get along, the parents and I, some of the parents and I were okay. Um, those were the ones that basically never even showed up to ARDs. You know the ones that just really didn't do, didn't participate a lot, um you know I only, I guess I only had problems probably with one parent… I ended up in therapy because of like this [teaching] experience [at Booker]…*
>
> *B: Uh-hm…*
>
> *J: Because it just crushed me, you know.*
>
> *B: Uh-hm.*
>
> *J: And, uh, so I didn't teach again. You know and then I was like you this isn't right. So I went back into school. And that class I guess kind of showed me like another way of looking at [sigh] what I went through and the way I was treated. And so, looking at it from, instead of you know the defensive like me, poor me! I was looking at it from their side too and their*

> *experiences that they probably had their whole lives. And that's you know of course shaped who they are and how they reacted to me. And so once I kind of saw that it kind of made things a whole lot better.* (II, S201, p. 8)

As a result of being able to re-think, [re]shape her understanding of what happened during her experience teaching at Booker, Caroline went back to teaching. After the interview she was hired as a PPCD teacher at an elementary school in a predominantly White upper middle class school district outside of Austin. She taught for one year and is now a diagnostician for an urban school district in Dallas, TX.

Portrait #2: Jennifer

COMING INTO THE STUDY…

I first met Jennifer in the Spring 2003, CCIMSE course when I was a TA. She was finishing up her Master's in Multicultural Special Education (MCSE) and came to the class with prior experience in diversity training. She had been a Resident Assistant (RA) for a dormitory on campus and as part of her training, she attended diversity-related workshops twice a year for the three years of her employment. The workshops were focused on different aspects of diversity such as race, sexuality, and religion. While the workshops provided a lot of good information, Jennifer explained that the training was more superficial than the experience she had in CCIMSE course.

It's about, it's a lot of the same type of stuff that Dr. Morales looks at but on a more, more superficial level. Like it's just not a, there's no reading attached…We had a whole day on African American Culture and how the identity, a lot of their identity um goes through a crisis that first year of who they are associating with and just how to be mindful of that. In the way that we set up just like programming in the halls and those kinds of things and they apply a lot of it to RA stuff but I saw a lot of overlay between that [and the course]. And then there's sexual like um Gay and Lesbian training day and that's really good because they talk a lot about how that's a kind of subculture that doesn't get a lot of recognition. You know. Simple things like, don't have date night and then expect it to be boy and girl, you know like they just bring it down to a level that RA's can use but again it's just sort to develop a mindfulness in RA's…And we had one day on religion and I think diversity was probably the topic that was given the most time in RA training, which is really great. It's really good and they do it twice a year. Spring and Fall so. But they don't give

you names for things they just make it very situational. (II, S202, p. 15)

She reported that her coursework in Multicultural Special Education centered on raising awareness about diversity, the disproportionate representation of students from culturally, linguistically, economically diverse backgrounds, and strategies for assessing and working with English language learners and dialectal differences in special education. As well, Jennifer was (and still is) in a long-term relationship with a young man who identifies as Pakastini. While he was not born in Pakistan, his parents immigrated to South Texas where he was born. His family still practices many of the traditions of their homeland and he understands the home language of his family. They are practicing Muslim while Jennifer's family practices Christianity. She commented that their religious differences have caused some tension with both families but each family has faith that the other will convert. However, Jennifer suggests that neither her nor Nizar plan on converting and quite possibly their relationship will end because of their religious differences.

J: His parents are kind of, I don't if they like me but they say things like, "She would be such a nice Muslim girl." You know like they think I am nice and sweet but it would be great, it would be perfect [if] I would convert and it's. I tell Nizar like that's never gonna happen [laughing]. And my parents say the same thing about him, "But he's a nice guy but you know is he gonna convert, is he gonna become Christian?" So.

B: So how do you two deal with that? Like what do you, do you have conversations about that?

J: Um, not enough conversations about it. No. We do, but we are kind of like, what do we do? I don't know. This is uncomfortable, let's talk about something else. So.

B: Do you ever worry that that may come between your relationship?

J: Oh yeah. I think if we break up it will be because of that. It will be because we have reached a point where, it's either make both of our parents really sad. You know it's not even about making them mad or disappointed. They're just gonna be sad. (II, S202, p.18)

Because Jennifer had not taught, she would often bring experiences from her relationship to class discussions along with what she had learned from previous coursework in MCSE to make connections with her new learning in CCIMSE. Due to her previous experiences, Jennifer felt coming into the class that she had learned a lot about a multicultural perspective but was still struggling with how to infuse this perspective into her teaching and relationships with others.

> *At the beginning of the semester I thought I knew a little bit about cross-cultural interactions but I had trouble linking together best practice, multicultural education, diversity, high expectations, etc. into a clear philosophy of teaching. (*FJE, S202, p. 5)

QUALIFYING FOR THE STUDY: JENNIFER'S INITIAL TRANSFORMATION

In her final journal entry, Jennifer discussed the many ways she had grown over the semester. She learned frameworks for understanding behavior and how identity influences the ways we behave, interact, and make meaning of the world.

> *Individualistic/Collectivistic and High/Low context. I think that naming these two important dimensions of culture changed the way I think and talk about groups of people. I had noticed the characteristics of individualism and collectivism and the difference of high low context communicators, but I didn't know what they were called or how deep they penetrate cultural groups*. (FJE, S202, p. 2)

> *An insightful time for me during the semester was when we learned about Helm's Stages of White and Non-White Racial Identity…I think that it's interesting to think about what experiences people have to move through before they can*

reach the final stage of acceptance and how many individuals aren't in the place or time in their life where they are exposed to the necessary people or ideas that will help them along in that process. (FJE, S202, p. 3-4)

This new knowledge of intercultural communication also helped her [re]shape her relationship with Nizar. She was able to apply what she had learned to her life experiences. She found that the frameworks for understanding intercultural communications helped her recognize patterns in her own communication with others, especially with Nizar.

J: *I think in the class with Dr. Morales gave me a lot of names for things that I have seen in our relationship and I am able to talk about them a lot more with him now. Because I can totally explain you know? And also I understand, I don't take things as personally as I did. Um, cuz before I just kind of felt like, you don't know who I am, but I'm nice like why don't I just don't understand like I love him why, why wouldn't they just get to know me? You know but I, I can understand more from my parent's perspective. It's easier for me to see the values that my parents I think have passed on to me, and name them. And it is just so nice to be able to name things um but that doesn't help…*

B: But does that work?

J: Because it helps me name them and helps me understand them but it's like you get to that point where you can have a conversation to problem solve and I think that is where we are. (II, S202, p. 5)

Jennifer also talked about gaining new insight on her understanding of their religious differences and how it might affect Nizar differently if he chose to marry her.

J: And um, And with me, this is something I thought about in our class because with me it's just my parents. My brothers, my sisters do not care. It's my Mom and Dad. And with him, he has extended family who matter to him as much if not more than just his parents, his grandparents, his uncles, aunts, and cousins who will all look down on this decision. And um, I used to think that. Actually before taking Dr. Morales's class and reading all of that stuff, I used to think that why couldn't he just step up and tell them. You know, but I love her and just let them deal with that and digest it. And now I am thinking, I'm understanding more about the values that underlie it, you know? And um, how it's just important to him to keep that

respect and the respect of the family. And so I think I am able to be a little bit more gentle about not. It's just the expectation that, cause I, I, I feel like I could tell my parents, I'm gonna marry this guy and yeah he's Muslim and yeah we don't know exactly how we are gonna raise our kids but you know, hopefully you guys can deal with it basically. I really could do it but he just has a really.

B: Why do you think you could do it and he can't?

J: Because of my, because of the individualistic nature of society that I have grown up in and my family just really embraces that…And they're not going to dis-own me they're in a way I think that the novelty of it, in some way can be, they'll actually respect. In a, a strange sort of you know kind of like if you believe in it enough type of thing then well you know we disagree with her but she must really believe in this. This is the sacrifice that she'll make, so that's respectable… (II, S202, p. 10)

While she felt like, Nizar being from a collectivistic background, his family would see his actions as disrespectful. So she began to develop new

understandings of her relationship with Nizar and the future of their relationship. In the end, she seemed at peace with knowing that if their relationship didn't work out, it was not personal but rather a result of their religious and cultural differences.

Jennifer also reported learning more about how to infuse a multicultural perspective into her classroom practice.

> *The importance of honoring diversity in the educational materials that we select for our students and our own learning was a major insight for me. The article that we read by Corso, Santos, & Roof helped me to formulate some concrete ways for making sure that my students learn to respect others and how to recognize that inequities that are the undercurrent of our society and are reflected in our materials…it's not just presenting information that is culturally relevant to our students but also that it is important to educate students who may not be exposed to differences by using multicultural curriculum.* (FJE, S202, p. 1)

> *I think that my paradigm for teaching has changed dramatically over the past semester. Where I used to think "here is what I will do to promote multiculturalism…" now I think more in terms of the experiences that my students will*

bring to the class, what some of their beliefs about what it means to be at school might be, and how we can learn together. (FJE, S202, p. 5)

As well, Jennifer felt the course helped develop her critical thinking skills and realize the importance of reflection as a tool for thinking critically.

I think that this class especially made me very skeptical of the information that I read, and caused me to think about where it came from and what the author's agenda or background was. (FJE, S202, p. 2)

I think that thinking about how important reflection is has been a critical part of my growth in this class. One thing that I worry about when I get in the classroom is that I will be so busy with teaching that I won't stop to think about that teaching. Graduate school in general but especially our conversations in this class, has shown me that it's in the reflecting that our ideas are scrutinized, evolve, and are improved. I am still thinking about ways to incorporate continuous reflection into my teaching and my life when I don't have our class as the framework. (FJE, S202, p. 4)

Ultimately, Jennifer walked away from class still thinking about how she would develop supports to continue to grow.

> *Another major insight for me this semester was how valuable a resource some organizations can be (namely the Council for Exceptional Children) and how important it is for us to be "experts" and to collect professional knowledge from a variety of sources.* (FJE, S202, p. 2)

> *I will need to continue reading articles and reflecting not only about communication and culture but also about special education and how these areas are intertwined. I worry sometimes that I will grow stagnant. I am nervous about where to get these articles and how I will have that time to reflect on them or who I will talk to about them.*

> *The second thing that I have been thinking about is coming back to school. I can see myself teaching for two to three years and then returning to the University. Coming back for my own learning needs to be "the light at the end of the tunnel" so to speak.* (FJE, S202, p. 6)

She also talked about a group of "supportive teaching friends" that she has formed through her coursework. She hopes to continue to meet with them for support to debrief and reflect on her teaching and broader life experiences.

> *As I encounter things in teaching and life over the years I hope that I can use their insights to help me develop and refine my own beliefs*. (FJE, S202, p. 7)

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON JENNIFER

Jennifer was raised in an upper middle class home with two parents. While her father was raised working class, he rose up the economic ladder from owning his own business (in what?). Jennifer's mother was a stay at home Mom. Jennifer is the oldest of four children and was home schooled until the ninth grade when her mother decided to stop home schooling because it got to be too much with four children of varying ages.

> *B: And so your Mom was home with you full-time and then do you have siblings?*
>
> *J: Yeah, I have, I but there's six years apart and um she home schooled some of my brothers and my sister for a while but not as long as she home schooled me. So, because what happened is she couldn't keep that up. With more than one… And so with me, I think there are two things. Easy cause you have one kid and I was never non-compliant you know, um I was always like*

my Mom had a great idea. Sure we'll do whatever. And um I think the second thing is that just in terms of energy, my Mom couldn't have an unstructured day with more than one child. So, they had to get more structured and I think it's hard [pause] I don't think home schooling works if you're not doing it like that. I think it just becomes really dry kind of isolating. Um so they're yeah. So she had to put them in school. (II, S202, p.5)

Jennifer's mother remained very active in all of her children's education through school functions. Her mother was also active with the local Catholic Church and as a family they spent many holidays volunteering at soup kitchens or donating old clothes and household items to those less fortunate. She stated that her experience with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds coincided with helping those in need.

B: You know what kind of experiences around that [having relationships with people of color or from different economic class] like did your Mom ever venture over to East Austin with you and give you experiences or?

J: [Laugh] Maybe to pass out food [laughing] to help like. No I do remember that my parents help, they were huge volunteers

at food bank type people. And they would go there and on Thanksgiving we would cook Turkeys at a church in East Austin and that kind of stuff. But again it wasn't to make friends or mingle or socialize. It was to help, you know. (II, S202, P. 8)

Her mother often made the assumption that families attending church that did not speak English needed their assistance and would offer donations to them.

J: I think it was like a very well intentioned mind-set but more like we'll help them. Cause I remember that we had housekeepers from um, [pause and quietly] where was she from? Guatemala or I don't even, I can't remember but my Mom was always out to help. Like, ohh they speak Spanish let's help them type of thing.

B: Kind of like savior.

J: Exactly, yeah. Or at church you know she would seek out the families that looked kind of poor and just well let's help them. You know, but usually she thought that because they were speaking Spanish, that was usually why.

B: So she equated the fact that they spoke Spanish maybe they're poor.

J: And they probably were, you know but I don't necessarily [think that they] needed like [laughing] our hand-me-downs or they wanted them! (II, S202, p. 6)

Because Jennifer was home schooled, a lot of time was spent with her mother as a child. Her schooling experience until she entered high school was very child centered. She recalled spending a whole year only doing math and mostly learned these skills through playing cards with her father. She did not like to read very much until she grew into adulthood. In fact she discussed how her mother encouraged her to do what interested her.

J: My elementary [slowly] schooling was very self-driven. Like if I was, like I remember doing math just for a whole year [laughing] like cause I really liked it.

B: Uh, hm.

J: And so, and I didn't really like to read too much. Literacy was kind of hard when I was like seven. So I just did math!

B: Uh, hm

J: So, and that was fine. My mom was like well; I guess you're really gifted there, so I just did it. And then, the next year she kind of started integrate more, so it was REALLY *what I wanted to do…* (II, S202, p. 4)

As part of her home schooling experience they were part of a network of families who also home schooled their children. When I asked Jennifer what was the demographic make up of the group she said:

J: Yeah, of course I mean it was mostly people of privilege that were white, mostly. But I remember that I had a few African American friends. Probably two growing up actually that were in the group. Um, but my best friend was Hispanic about my whole life, Elena. But she was home schooled also until high school. So [long pause]. I think it was, I think that I met a lot of different kinds of people but not as I mean two black kids that your friends with is not [pause] but I don't know. I, I'm, I'm, I was thinking maybe it's not exactly normal but then the school that I am teaching at there aren't even two black kids [laughter] so maybe it is more than I think. You know?

B: Well I'm what I'm curious is like about how many families were involved?

J: Um…A lot like hundreds (II, S202, p. 3)

Mainly the families would meet up for field trip type outings, so most of her home schooling experience was spent with her mother. As a result, Jennifer had minimal contact with people of color or from lower economic status until she went into High school. Her family moved to Corpus Christi for her father's work and Jennifer's mother was feeling overwhelmed with having four children to home school. So her parents decided to send them to public school, which was a major transition for Jennifer because it was the first time she was exposed to kids of color. It was difficult because of her fair complexion, blonde hair, and economic status many of the Latino girls picked on her. As a result, most of her friends were White. It really wasn't until she came to the University of Texas that she became friends with people from different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

> *While I grew up in a monolingual English speaking home and was very middle class, not to mention home-schooled until 9th grade – now I am friends with many ethnically diverse people; my boyfriend is Pakistani, my 2 best friends are Latino and Indian. However, these relationships didn't occur – couldn't really – until coming to UT.* (DS[8], S202, p. 7)

[8] DS denotes Demographic Survey, which was a data source.

Jennifer received her Bachelor's in Education and continued straight through to receive her Master's in Multicultural Special Education. Currently Jennifer is in her second year of teaching special education at a school in the wealthier section of Austin where most of the student population is White.

Portrait #3: Renee

COMING INTO THE STUDY…

Renee and I first met during two guest lectures I gave in a vocational rehabilitation course centered on diversity in the Fall of 2003. Renee was a first semester Master's student in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and was working toward becoming a counselor for VR services. During the semester I guest lectured in her class, she was also enrolled in CCIMSE and related some of what she was learning in that class to the lectures I gave in her other course. So, when I contacted her about the study in the Spring of 2004, she was excited because she found my presentations interesting and felt a sense of connection with me.

During the course, Renee did not share very much in whole group settings but rather expressed most of her thoughts in her journals. She did not feel comfortable because she felt that others were more articulate than her.

> *I know I have discussed many personal things in terms of the journal papers, but in class discussion, my heart starts to race, my palms get sweaty, and I feel if I open my mouth to say anything, I fear I will get "eaten" alive. Although I know I am acting silly, my behavior's never changed.*

I think, "what do I have to add to the conversation?" I wish I were at least half as smart as Angela, or insightful like Lisa or as witty at Rose. Even Greg comes up with these brilliant ideas about things, leaving me to wonder, "Will I ever be that smart?" I know part of my problem is that I process information very slowly (the result of a head injury I received years ago). In addition, I have to admit that a lot of the classroom material scares me! I know that seems absurd, but that is exactly how I feel. When I come into the classroom, all of the information flies right out the window. The inquisitive par of me gets excited about learning, but my low self-confidence makes me feel that I will never be able to fit the proper definition of "culturally competent." In other words, I feel like everyone is a step ahead of me because of their experiences. (FJE, F204, p. 1)

She also felt that she lacked cultural experiences.

Other people in our class have grown up around eclectic groups of individuals-people from all different walks of life. I did not experience diversity (racial or ethnic) growing up in Missouri. My family didn't have the money to travel; hence,

what I learned about other cultures I learned from classroom lecture, books, and videos. (FJE, S204, p.2)

QUALIFYING FOR THE STUDY: RENEE'S INITIAL TRANSFORMATION…

Renee reported that the course stirred up a lot of emotions for her and while it was difficult at times she welcomed the new insights.

> *I want to say that this has been [one of] the most stressful, exciting, tiring, emotionally and intellectually stimulating classes I have attended. I have spent so many nights thinking about our classroom discussions that I had a hard time getting to sleep*. (FJE, S204, p.1)

In reviewing her journal, Renee discussed that she had grown in many ways over the semester as a result of the course. Overall the class taught her to become more mindful through the use of self-reflection about cross-cultural interactions, her religious beliefs, her upbringing and its' influence on her values and beliefs, and the interaction between her emotions and word choice.

> *I think one of the most important elements of this class is to be mindful of how I communicate and the process it involves, in order to communicate effectively and non-offensively with clients, peers, in addition to complete strangers*. (FJE, S204, p. 4)

> *Through self-reflection [in CCIMSE], I have been able to see aspects of my life-values, behaviors, ingroups, outgroups, beliefs about things-that I never took the time to think about before*. (FJE, S204, p. 2)

> *In addition I now understand that many of my values lie upon the experiences I had growing up in a single-parent family with a conservative household. I have many feminist behaviors that often conflict with my so-called conservative upbringing (or so my mother says). (*FJE, S204, p. 2)

She learned to recognize how her assumptions shaped her cross-cultural communication with a friend from South Korea.

> *Two weeks ago, I was asking my friend David*[9] *(who's from South Korea) if "they" eat dogs in their country. I did this because my husband told me he had heard about this being done by a fellow business associate. When I asked David this question, he was taken aback, and said, "no, no I do not eat dog!"* (FJE, S204, p. 3)

Embarrassed she explained to him why she asked the question and later reflected on how she could have approached the situation differently.

[9] Pseudonym

> *My point is it would have been more appropriate had I asked Sunny what the cultural practices were (in South Korea) in terms of eating different kinds of animals or meat. I would never want to offend David, as he is my friend, so from now on I am going to make sure to phrase all of my questions in a way that is respectful and non-assuming toward other cultural groups*. (FJE, S204, p. 3)

Renee gained insight on how she wants to manage her religious beliefs when working with individuals who do not share the same religion.

> *I realize that my spiritual background is important to me, and that I want to hold tight to my beliefs* <u>*without*</u> *ever inflicting my religious perspectives or beliefs on others in a way that would offend or upset individuals from a different faith. My faith is important to me, but being respectful of others in their lack of or different set of beliefs is a lot higher on my priority list, especially when it comes to me training to be a counselor. I think practitioners really need to examine whether or not their views or values clash with the cultural values or beliefs of the client. Competent counselors must exercise care not to impose their own values or expectations upon an individual, and be*

mindful of potentially judgmental behavior (Ivey & Ivey, 2003; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). (FJE, S204, p. 4)

She ended her journal expressing an interest in continuing to grow:

I feel very fortunate that I was able to be exposed to an environment that not only challenged me to get to know myself, but that also manifested within me the will to learn more about other people, other ways of life and new ways of thinking. As a teacher, you created this experience within your classroom, and you pushed forward no matter how stubborn we were…and I thank you. (FJE, S204, p. 5)

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RENEE

Renee was raised in a small town in Southern Missouri in a single parent home with her mother and younger brother. Her father, who was a trucker, abandoned the family shortly after her brother was born. As a result Renee did not have a relationship with her father while she was growing up. Her mother was from a working class background and they remained at that status during her upbringing.

R: My mom comes from a family where nobody graduated with a high school or with a college education. And, like her brother was a farmer, a milk farmer.

B: Like a dairy farmer?

R: A dairy farmer, uh huh. And lived in a more rural area and they got by. I'd say my whole, her whole family was lower, lower middle class. I never knew anything different. Like to me that was fine. I mean I wanted to have Guess clothes and whatever was popular at the time, but we got Wal-mart.

B: Yea.

R: I hated that. I hated it, not because I was ashamed, like when I went to school I was made fun of and I was so tall, that at the time, we didn't know that you could order out for clothes, you know, from different companies, to get them longer. So, I would wear high water jeans from Wal-mart and I got made fun of and I was really skinny, really skinny. (II, F204, p. 3)

Renee stressed that being from a poorer background had a tremendous affect on her schooling because it interfered with her learning capabilities.

Yea. And, like this weekend is my ten-year high school reunion and I didn't want to go back because I have no desire to see any of those people that made fun of me all through high

school. I know I'm supposed to mature now, but I just, I don't wish them any good will. Whatever they get is what they deserve. High school can be a really horrible place when you're beaten up and you're held down in the locker room. [Slight Chuckle] (II, F204, p. 3)

She was constantly picked on and she dreaded going to school. Her school was "in a very conservative area…in the bible belt." Most of her peers were White from either wealthy or very poor backgrounds. She commented that there was no middle class. In elementary and middle school Renee was sick a lot from fear because she was picked on so much. Many of her friends were not in the "popular" crowd and she often felt like a social outcast until her sophomore year of high school.

R: …High school's not a good thing for me to think about and neither was elementary or junior high, they were worse.

B: So did you have any good friends in those grades?

R: I did.

B: What were they like?

R: Well, I think they were still worried about being picked on themselves; they didn't ever stand up for you. But they, I mean

I had friends. I had, I would, my friends were considered the goodie, the nerdy girls…Then my luck kind of changed when I was 16, I had that car accident.

Renee was driving down a country road on the way to her first job at a Subway and as she came over a hill she saw another vehicle heading right for her, so she swerved off the road.

But there's no where to go, so my car kind of…wobbled against all the trees, you know smacking into the trees. I smashed my head into the rear view mirror and windshield. I passed out into the passenger seat… And the car got passed me somehow and the car, my car veered back over to the left and went off an embankment and hit a tree at the bottom…And I guess my car was smoking real bad and the guy in the [other car] thought that it was going to explode…

And he came and I was laying over the seat. The windshield was busted out…and he lifted me straight up, which gave me two compression fractures. (II, F204, p. 4)

Because the accident was so severe, they had to close off the road where the accident occurred and a helicopter was flown in to take her from the scene because they could not get emergency vehicles to her.

R: They called my mom and they said that I'd been labeled a DOA and they were flying me to the hospital, because they didn't know. My head was so bloody, and so many cuts, and it almost cut my eye out over here. See that scar?

B: Wow!

R: So, all I remember, from what people told me is, they called my mom, but my mom beat the helicopter to the hospital and I was unconscious for eight hours. But after that, after I went back to school after a couple of weeks and my eye was swollen shut for like a month or two. I had all these bandages and everything. From that point on, people stopped picking on me. (II, F204, p. 5)

I asked Renee how the accident impacted her life. She responded:

R: In every way. I mean, I have, after that, I went through serious depression. I was already really depressed anyway because my grandparents had been killed in a horrible car accident the year before.

B: Wow.

R: And um, I was in so much pain… that I started abusing my medicine… (II, F204, p. 6)

So the doctor threatened to put her in detox, which resulted in her taking better care of herself and she stopped abusing her medicine. At school her social network changed.

R: And, um. I guess the interest, the accident, everybody knew about it at school so it was real interesting, so they talked about it for a long time, because it was the worst accident, you know, for a high school, that's…

B: So, did your friendship circles change after that?

R: Yea, I, the mean people quit picking on [me], but um, I got into debate, I got out of band, but my grades went down. (II, F204, p. 6)

Because of the accident, Renee suffered short-term memory loss and chronic back pain until her freshman year in college, which affected her learning. Since, she was a junior by the time she returned to school, she had completed most of her core coursework so she was mostly taking electives. After she graduated, Renee went on to college. She started out making decent grades but then she was in a second car accident. After that, she could not concentrate and tended to drift off during lectures and when people were talking to her. Her grades

slipped and by the end of the semester she ended up with mostly D' and F's. So two of her professors, who knew about the second car accident, suggested that there was something more going on with her and recommended that she meet with the Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities.

> *She [the director] met with us and did this assessment on me, she said "you need to get in touch with vocational rehabilitation now! Or, as soon as you can. You need to be tested." So she set us up with them [VR]. We (my mom and I) had no idea of the concept, traumatic brain injury or disability and my mom's sitting here worried about the class.* (II, F204, p. 10)

Renee went to VR services, who set up an appointment with a neuro-psychologist who ran a series of tests. He determined that Renee had moderate traumatic brain injury.

> *He said "Didn't you say you've been in two car accidents?" And I said, "Yea." And he said, "Haven't you been in therapy for the last ten years?" And I said "Yea." He said, "How come nobody's ever brought this up and investigated it?" And my mom's like, "We don't know." So they ran all, more testing on me…And they found out that I had a [chuckles] traumatic brain injury this whole time and nobody ever assessed it. They*

> *[her teachers and previous doctors] kept attributing it [her learning ability and emotional state] to Attention Deficit Disorder and severe depression. And they [the new doctors] think Attention Deficit Disorder and severe depression was exacerbated by the first car accident … (II, F204, p. 10)*

This newfound knowledge brought Renee much peace and understanding for what she had gone through all these years since her first car accident. VR immediately stepped in to give her the support she needed to finish her schooling. They equipped her with three years of memory, speech and language therapy, one year of therapy with a neuro-psychologist, and an alphanumeric pager to remind her of her daily schedule. They also finished paying for her Bachelor's in Communications.

While she does not need as much assistance today, she continues to use memory aids and accesses counseling as needed. Because of her experience with VR services in helping her cope with her condition and navigate higher education, she was inspired to become a VR counselor. Renee recently graduated with her Master's in VR and is finishing up her Licensed Professional Counselor certificate. She hopes to continue on with her doctorate in either Multicultural Counseling or Vocational Rehabilitation.

Portrait #4: Amy

COMING INTO THE STUDY…

I met Amy at the same time I met Renee when I guest lectured in the Vocational Rehabilitation course on working with diverse populations. Amy came to the study in part through her connection to Renee. Amy and Renee became good friends as fellow graduate students in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In fact, during the collaborative inquiries Amy stayed with Renee. When I identified potential participants and began to call each individually, Amy commented that Renee had told her about the study and she would definitely be interested in helping out.

QUALIFYING FOR THE STUDY: AMY'S INITIAL TRANSFORMATION

Amy grew in many ways as a result of the course. She became aware of her own culture and how her values shaped her interactions with others as well as her expectations. She gained new insight on her relationships within her family and learned about the impact of assumptions in communicating with others.

Amy began to make new meaning of her family and their behavior and how that has impacted her identity.

> *This class has given me the opportunity to open up to others and be more accepting by learning more about myself and some of the factors that have shaped me. Knowing why I am, the way I am will help me to see others how they are as an individual.*

She explains that she became more aware of the impact her family values had on her sense of identity.

> *I am an Anglo-American who grew up in a middle class home. I had two parents who loved and took care of me. My father was very strict, I was taught to never talk back and when I did was punished. My father was big on respecting adults. I was taught to be obsessively neat and clean, which were common characteristics for lower middle class families. I thought it was interesting in the reading when it commented on common characteristics of individuals within a culture that I could relate to. Since, I did not think I had a culture, I did not think characteristics of it could be defined, but they were. Not speaking when other people spoke and to do what you were told. Affection was expressed in a punch on the shoulder or through play fighting, never a [hug]. Family always came first, we were taught to always be there for one another…*
>
> *In school I was always very quiet, partly because I was shy but the other part is that I was taught to be respectful by not talking when someone else does. I am very adamant about keeping my apartment neat and clean because I was always*

told I need to take care of the things we have, so they can last longer. (FJE, S205, p. 4-5)

She began to make new meaning of her father's behavior while she was growing up.

> *I use[d] to always look towards males as being more dominating figures, because my dad was the one who had to make all the decisions. My father was the one who made all the rules as well as providing the discipline. Majority of my life my father was the only one who worked because he liked being the provider of the family. When my mother tried to go back to college my father always encouraged her to drop out by telling her that by doing this she was neglecting the family. The things my father had done use[d] to frustrate me, but through-out this semester I have gone and looked at why my father behaved this way…*
>
> *For twenty-six years I have looked at my father as being narrow minded and a control freak. Now I look back at my life and see that this was his way of loving me, he just had a different way of showing his affection. His love was demonstrated through the fact that he worked hard and*

provided, while allowing my mother to stay home to take care of us. My heart has warmed toward my father's actions because he loved how he was taught to love. (FJE, F205, p. 4-5)

Amy also gained a new understanding of her grandmother.

This class has taught me how to be more aware of each person's communication style. Everyone interprets things differently and we need to be aware of how people interpret and communicate differently. By being aware of this it has help [sic] me to stop and ask what someone meant by what they said or did.

My Grandmother always makes the comment, "You can tell Amy has the Aussie blood in her, because she takes after me and is lazy. Clarissa (my sister) is nothing like the two of us." I use [sic] to get so offended when she would say this to me, I thought it meant that she was classifying me as being lazy and dumb and my sister as being smart and hard working. This semester I asked my grandmother what she meant. By lazy, my Grandmother meant it as liking to go to the beach to kick back and relax, while having fun. It was a complement [sic]

meaning that I took time to enjoy life. Many years I took it as an insult, if I would have just asked what she meant I could have… prevented this miscommunication. (FJE, F205, p. 6)

As a result of this newfound knowledge, Amy began to re-think about the importance of making sure her clients understood the deeper meaning behind her own communication.

As a counselor, I need to be sure that my clients know what I am saying and I understand them especially if there is a culture difference…If you are working together as a team toward the same purpose you need to be sure that you and your client are working in the same direction. (FJE, F205, p. 6-7)

This class built on what she had been learning in her counseling theory texts and she was able to learn more about her own identity.

In my counseling theories [sic] book one of the top ways to be an effective counselors [sic] is to be confidant in who you are and know your individual culture. Knowing who I am, and being confidant in who I am, allows me to be more accepting of individuals. This class taught me a lot about who I am and why I act and communicate the way I do. Before this class I did not even think that I had a culture, but I do. Being

confidant in who I am does not mean I think everyone should be like me, while understanding others culture does not mean I need to be like them. (FJE, F205, p. 4)

Amy reflected on how her expectations for clients were based on her own values and that she now will be open to learning more about what her clients want.

Being able to see life through the eyes of my client and recognizing that there is not one set way to do something. When I came into this class I had very strong beliefs that every individual needed to be as independent as possible. By independence I meant getting out of the house and working. I felt that any individual that [sic] did not have a job should have one, because that means that they world be "successful." Since, I found such joy in my job I felt that everyone else would feel the same way as I did. Looking at this now I see how this was a judgment [sic] call. (II, F205, p. 1)

When helping a client look for a job, culture is a big deal. What is best for them might not always be the easiest for you, but if I want to be a successful counselor, I need to be aware of my client's culture and values. Looking at why my client views

something the way he/she does will help me to understand my client more effectively. (FJE, F.205, p. 3)

Amy left class with a desire to learn more about different religious beliefs and cultures because: "I never want to take away something that could help my client in the rehabilitation process."

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON AMY

Amy grew up in a small town near the coast in South Texas. Her father works as a businessman for a chemical plant. Her mother stayed at home and took care of Amy and her sister until they became school aged. Then her mother worked as a secretary for the school system so she could have a similar schedule with holidays and summer vacation. Amy's sister, Jenna is two years older. Amy described her sister:

> *She's kind of, we're totally opposite, my sister was always kind of, like the lead in academics, like she was always top three of her class kind of and you know, president of every organization on campus…One of those, more on top of it…I think my sister was always, always talked…kind of talked for me, and told me what to do…she was always right. Everything she does is perfect. (II, F205, p. 4)*

Amy on the other hand was the shy-type that did not have the same drive as her sister.

[Unlike my sister] I didn't go off to school [college], like my first year…I was gonna go to [a small 4-year college] and I registered for class and everything, and my sister still thought I was like the biggest loser because I wasn't going to UT or A& M [which are bigger universities]. I think those were her, you know top schools or whatever, and she knew what she wanted to do, I didn't.

I didn't know if I was ready, I mean I skipped class a lot in high school, so I didn't know if I wanted to go, you know. (II, S205, p. 4-5)

Instead Amy continued to work at a Chinese restaurant in her hometown where she worked in high school as well. Then she went to a local junior college and went on to Texas State where she began a degree in social work and later went into education. When I asked Amy how she became interested in social work she responded:

I think because I was, I started going on, when I was in high school, I started going on mission trips. And I worked with people with disabilities and I really liked that and I kind of thought I wanted to work like in a group home, residential

facility, or a nursing home environment, so then I kind of chose social work from there. (II, F205, p. 5)

Amy suggested that her mother had a big influence on her growing up. Her mother worked at the schools in lower socioeconomic areas because that was where she grew up. Amy explained that her mother was very active with their local church and volunteered as a mentor with young girls from "disadvantaged" homes. Amy and her mother would pick up the young girls around holidays and bring them to holiday events at the church. Sometimes they would take the girls out to eat to give them positive experiences in the community.

[My mom] was the secretary, I guess like schools that were lower socioeconomic because, I guess my mom also came from that area, or that side of town, you know, kind of growing up, I mean, her father died when she was young and they had a bigger family, and, you know, so it was not like they had a lot of money. But my mom would always, like for Christmas…my mom would always, you know, pick up the group of girls and stuff and [I'd] go into their houses and, you know visit with their families and you know, they would give my mom like, with names scratched out and stuff and my mom would get so excited about it, you know, but it rubs off on you.

B: So did you use to, like, go deliver gifts to these people?

C: Yeah. And then they, we'd go to like, I guess like the Christmas pageants at church and stuff, or I'd go with them to go out and eat and stuff. (II, F205, p. 6)

Amy's mother also helped in the community with adults who had cognitive disabilities.

B: So your mom did like a lot of volunteering with different community members?

C: Yeah, yeah she was real good at that. And even like, we had a couple people that had special needs in our neighborhood that went to our church. And my mom, like when their parents would go out of town, she would go and take care of them, or make sure that their, you know, the dinner would get cooked, or whatever… I kind of take after my mom more, my sister kind of took after my dad. (II, F205, p. 6)

Amy explained that her sister did not do as many community-oriented activities with their mother. She said that they also had very different schooling experiences growing up.

You know, kind of do that or whatever, because I think she, I don't know, I mean my sister is so opposite, but I think to, and then I also went to a magnet school when I was younger. I was the only white child at my school, or like in the whole 5th grade. (II, F205, p. 6)

In fifth grade Amy's parents transferred her into the local magnet school where her mother worked, which was primarily black and Hispanic from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Her sister remained at their home school, which was mostly white middle class. In junior high and high school, Amy played basketball so most of her friends were from the team.

So I played basketball, so a lot of my friends were, I guess the people that played basketball were, it was more diverse, it wasn't like the drill team and cheerleading, you know and so. A lot of my friends were, I guess more African American, [and Hispanic] (II, F205, p. 8)

But I know, like at lunch and stuff, you know I always sat, I didn't sit with, like, all the White people, I sat kind of, kind of separated, you know. But I think, as I got older, I kind of blended in more. (II, F205, p. 11)

On the other hand, Jenna mostly hung around the "smart kids" who were from the top of her class. Most of Amy's friends were in trouble a lot with either getting suspended, expelled, or dropping out from school. She had many friends who became pregnant in high school and went to a lot of baby showers. In school she witnessed differential treatment because she was White.

> *I think that I was the only White kid in my class and I had a White teacher and I think the first test I made like 110 and I was her favorite. I know I was her favorite through the whole year, you know. And it was one, I think it was her first year teaching too, but I think she related to me because I was kind of, because I was White. (II, F205, p. 10)*

Her sister would give her hard time about having friends of color.

> *I think my sister used to freak out because I had like [friends of color], I mean, I think she would think I was dating people [of color] and so she'd freak out, like, "Oh my gosh!"…then my sister wouldn't give me telephone calls, [laughing] because, she'd be like, "isn't he black?"*

When she would go on dates with boys who were Hispanic, she was not comfortable telling her parents. She explained:

> *And then like one time, I didn't want to get into it with my parents so I lied about his last name, it was Lopez [laughing*

hard] and I said it was Smith, and I told them that [still laughing] and the thing is, they ended up knowing his parents [still laughing] and so the whole family knew I lied, but then it's I just couldn't get into it, I was like whatever. [Still laughing] So, it was kind of bad. (II, F205, p. 10)

Amy still has many friends of color today. Her best friend, Miranda is Cuban and she has been dating a young man from India.

After college Amy taught special education at a suburban high school outside of Houston. The high school had about 4,000 students was very diverse with mostly international students from different Asian countries such as India, China, and Taiwan. At the high school there was a program called Partners in which general education students would volunteer in the special education classrooms. Amy taught life skills with students with severe and profound disabilities. So she had students from the Partners program volunteer in her classroom.

Yeah, the high school I worked at. And like the, like everybody that worked in it, like the majority of the kids that came and helped us, were, like kids from like Taiwan and stuff you know, that were Asian…(II, F205, p. 16)

While she was teaching, Amy decided to return to school for a Master's in vocational rehabilitation because she worked with parents in the transition process and wanted to learn more to help improve services.

> *I was a special ed. teacher. That's why I ended up going into vocational rehab because, I guess like the whole transition part, like a lot of my parents, I think struggled with, after their child would graduate and stuff, getting them hooked up to services and stuff, they would say, maybe remain, you know like with MHMR or something like for a year or something, or you know get services and stuff and then just kind of think, you know kind of quit because it was too much of a hassle, so some of my students were just staying at home, like with the parents, you know, like took care of [their] kids…'cause the parents were also frustrated too, you know, "what do I do with my child?" not wanting to necessarily put them in a group home or something. I guess if even if it's like just, you know transportation services and stuff and dealing with all that, it was just really frustrating and then I read about this program [inaudible] and I really like teaching like the vocational aspect of my job 'cause I did like job coaching in the summer, so then*

I kind of, I found this program and wanted to come. (II, F205, p. 16)

Amy is currently finishing up her Master's Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation as she is doing an internship in Houston, TX.

Portrait #5: Kimberly

COMING INTO THE STUDY…

My first encounter with Kimberly was over the phone. She had taken Dr. Morales' course in the Fall of 2003. Oddly enough I recognized her name because we both worked for the same research center on campus but had never formally met. Kimberly came highly recommended for the study because she had a deeper understanding of difference in education that Dr. Morales felt would add to my study. When I first spoke with Kimberly about the study over the phone she seemed knowledgeable about my research, as Dr. Morales had spoken with her about my study. Similar to Jennifer, Kimberly came into CCIMSE with prior diversity related training. She had taught for Teach for America in the Mississippi Delta for two years in a rural elementary school that primarily served African American students from high poverty backgrounds.

K: Well, I taught at the only elementary school in the county, so we had, approximately 750 in lower grades, K-3…

B: The kids were bused?

> *K: My kids could have been on the bus for up to half an hour, when they got to school. There was one elementary school, one middle school, one high school. They, everyone was on free breakfast and lunch, so very low income, average income in the county was $8000.* (II, F206, p. 16)

As part of her training for Teach for America, Kimberly received six weeks of training to prepare her for the experience. The program primarily focused on working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations through lecture, readings, assignments, and guest speakers.

> *We were reading Delpit, Ladson-Billings, Nieto, we were reading McIntosh you know. Like learning about all those things that I think are sometimes missing from traditional certification programs, but it was six weeks.* (II, F206, p. 13)

As a result of this experience with multicultural concepts she was able to recognize the deeper meaning of her experience in the Mississippi Delta and connect with core concepts in CCIMSE.

> *I have to admit that this class was the one I was least looking forward to taking when I registered for classes. I was worried that it would be the typical multicultural class where we cam to the big Hallmark-type realization, "we are all different, yet all*

the same." I figured we would read Peggy McIntosh's article about white privilege and some people would have their eyes opened to the issues of race. Don't get me wrong – I think that those classes have value and are appropriate for some people that are at that level of racial identity development. I just felt that I had already gotten to that point…

My experience of living in a small town in the Mississippi Delta taught me a lot about what it means to be white. I saw that the same houses that were unavailable to my black Teach for America friends were available to be rented to me. I heard what some white teachers that I worked with say about "those people," meaning the very children [who were black] who sat in their classroom. I saw the differences between the school where I taught and the all-white academy [private school for whites]. I saw how I was treated differently in stores when I was alone and when I brought some of my students with me. I had a principal [who was black] call me a honky when she thought I couldn't hear her. I had students [who were black] amazed that my stomach was white too (not to mention that my

parents were white – they just couldn't get over that one!) (FJE, F206, p. 1)

When she entered the study she had just completed her Master's in multicultural special education and was getting ready to begin her PhD just ten days after her individual interview. Kimberly wanted to get her PhD because she wanted to make a difference in education.

B: And what drove you into getting your PhD?

K: Some of the same things you had mentioned. During my Master's I was like, okay, I'm doing this in one year because I want to be back in the classroom. I'm going to miss my kids so much, I want to go back. All that kind of stuff. But then, after a semester, it was like, there is still so much work to be done. And really what's the best way for me to effect the most change? Is that being a teacher? Which I think I could; there's a lot of skills that I have as a teacher. There's a lot that I still need to gain, but then I'm affecting [only] those kids in my classroom.

B: Right.

> *K: But how can I really make some kind of, I want to say societal change…also, just realizing I felt vastly unprepared when I started teaching, 'cause I went through an alternative method. But coming here and talking to other teachers in the Master's program, everyone felt that unprepared. And I just don't understand why we can't get this together*. (II, F206, p. 2-3)

QUALIFYING FOR THE STUDY: KIMBERLY'S INITIAL TRANSFORMATION

While Kimberly entered class with knowledge of multicultural concepts, most of her training and experiences emphasized racial difference. As a result CCIMSE broadened her awareness of culture and factors that influence our communication with others.

> *My awareness of culture really was limited just to race and ethnicity. I did not acknowledge or recognize the existence of a special education culture that shares beliefs and values that effect interactions with others*. (FJE, S206, p. 2)

In particular, Kimberly discussed how her approach to working with parents and families was impacted by the class.

> *It is interesting to note that the area that I experienced the most growth is not necessarily tied to race or ethnicity. Instead it is*

> *the divide between parents and professionals. I was aware of what my being white brought to the table and brought to my interactions with parents…I was not aware of how my use of professional jargon and my position in the schools' power system impacted my interactions with parents and families.* (FJE, F206, p. 2)

She began to re-construct her approach to working with parents as a result of a class assignment in which she talked to a friend from a different cultural background who happened to have a child with a disability.

> *Through my cross-cultural dialogue with Mary, one of my parents from last year, I was struck most not about how her being Mexican-American affected our interactions but instead how listening to her as a friend was different than listening to her as her son's teacher. I was able to really hear what she wanted for her son…without worrying about how that schedule would work, or if it would work, etc. Instead, I listened and learned about her childhood, her dreams for [her son] and what skills he needed to be successful in life, his reality. Listening to her family story and present reality, I really gained a better sense of who [her son] is, a sense I could not*

> *have gained through any other exercise. I will listen to families in new ways as a result of this exercise.* (FJE, F206, p. 2)

She combined this newfound approach with her awareness of educational inequity to expand her lens by examining the contextual and systematic underpinnings in communicating with parents, families, and children from diverse backgrounds.

> *Before I took this class, I was partly aware of what I brought to the table and what parents brought to the table. There is not a level playing field for culturally and linguistically diverse students, and the playing field is not even for their parents either. The system is based on values and beliefs of people who look a lot like me [white middle class]. This in and of itself shifts the balance of power away from minority parents. This class as given me the tools to help level the playing field for parents, and in turn their children, by changing the lens I use to look at parents and at the system and by expanding my knowledge of communication styles. This class has forced me to examine the table itself.* (FJE, F206, p. 3-4)

As a result of her learning from CCIMSE, Kimberly expressed an interest in continuing to learn more about the impact of culture on education as well as her own role in the system.

> *I want to continue the process of examining the cultural underpinnings of our educational system and how mainstream values and beliefs are transmitted to our children and our families through the system. I wasn't to continue examining and monitoring the professional language that I use for embedded cultural values and subjectivity. I want to be aware of that so I can help eliminate them or, at the very least, account for them. (FJE, F206, p. 4)*

Kimberly also learned about the power of reflection in developing her own awareness and skills for working with diverse populations.

> *By reflecting on my past experiences I gained a much deeper sense and understanding of the ways education is built on the transmission of culture. I was able to reflect both on things that I had done well and things that I hadn't done well. I gained an understanding of why my principal and I had so many misunderstandings due to our communication styles…As Kalyanpur and Harry say, "reflective practice should become a way of life for professionals and not be just an 8-hour*

> *syndrome" (121). In order to continue growing as a professional, I must make reflection a way of life*. (FJE, F206, p. 4)

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON KIMBERLY

Kimberly was born and raised in Florida and grew up outside of Orlando in an upper middle class neighborhood in the suburbs. Her father was a Banker and her mother was a teacher who became a stay at home mother by the time Kimberly was born. Kimberly is the youngest of four children. Her brother and one sister are both lawyers and her other sister, Shannon works for the March of Dimes. In fact, Kimberly commented that Shannon has had a big impact on her life. Similar to Shannon, Kimberly has a Bachelor's degree in Women's Studies, and Shannon worked for Americorps – Vista, which is how Kimberly became interested in Teach for America.

When I inquired about the diversity of her neighborhood growing up she commented:

> *My neighborhood now is becoming more mixed with, with more Cuban families moving in, but it's still predominately White…The community where I grew up, [was and still is] very well off. The public schools were excellent and not a very ethnically diverse community at all*. (II, F206, p. 24)

Kimberly attended public schools. She remembers her elementary school being mostly white upper middle class but that changed once she moved into middle and high school where the student population was economically diverse with about 55% White and 45% Hispanic or Latino. While the secondary schools were diverse, her classmates were mostly White except in the non-tracked classes such as Spanish. She was in the honor's track.

K: You know I was in…

B: AP?

K: AP and gifted and that track and everyone else in my classes were white, but in my Spanish classes, there were usually, [inaudible], you know? They were proportional with the rest, with the school population. And so, there were friends that I had in those classes, you know, and that were in my Spanish classes all four years. You know? And so I got to be good friends, but you did not do things outside of school with, or I did not do things outside of school.

B: With your Latino friends?

K: With my Latino friends.

B: And why do you think that is?

K: [Pause] I don't know. It's just kind of the social cast system of American high schools, you know? [Laughs a little]… You don't really do anything with anyone that's not in your group and that group did have things to do with race, it had things to do social class, it had things to do with activities, it had things to do with who you've known since elementary school. You know? Like, for whatever reasons why they're wrong, that's just kind of who I hung out with.

After high school, Kimberly went on to receive a Bachelor's in Sociology and Women's Studies from the University of Virginia. Again most of her peers were white from upper middle class backgrounds with the exception of an African American boy she dated.

K: I dated a guy in college who was African American and I like to joke, that he was whiter than I am. He's from Atlanta and was named after Hunter S. Thompson the writer and went to the elite prep schools in Atlanta and had a lot of money…Great guy, but not, you know.

B: Why do you think he was more White than you? I mean what, like from his background created that?

K: I think his parents [pause] also were, they're both big lawyers in Atlanta and had, kind of always been the one Black kid in his class and all of his friends were White, he joined an all White Fraternity at UVA. (II, F206, p. 26)

While she was working on her undergraduate degree, Kimberly worked for the Department of Social Services.

K: I worked for the Department of Social Services while I was in college and did a lot with juvenile delinquents. I hate that term juvenile delinquents, juvenile offenders is a much better way of putting it, and teenage moms. And so my thesis was about how, you know, which of the different options for pregnancy prevention programs really work. You do abstinence only, you do sex education or my argument was, you don't have to even really talk to them about sex, it's more doing job training. After school programs, that kind of thing, going on the whole feeling of the best contraception is a real future. And there's a reason why I didn't get pregnant in high school, because I had a reason not to. And I found that a lot of the kids that I worked with in the Department of Social

Services, they just didn't really; there was no reason not to get pregnant.

B: Because it wasn't going to impede their future?

K: Right. It doesn't change your plans, if you're going to drop out of high school anyway, well, why not have a kid?

When she finished college Kimberly was at a cross-roads wondering what to do next as she had been offered an internship in Washington DC for a Senator but felt that she wanted to something more than be a "secretary." So she applied for Teach for America. During her Teach for America experience, Kimberly met her now fiancée, Mark, who also taught for Teach for America in the Mississippi Delta. Mark is Jewish and Kimberly was baptized Methodist. However, Kimberly did not attend church regularly growing up. So, I asked her:

B: And so how has that been, dating a Jewish person?

K: It's been interesting, it's been…

B: Is he, or like what level …?

K: He's reformed, his mother's Jewish, his father is not. And he wasn't raised very religious, but he went to Brandice, which is a predominately Jewish school and he's definitely become more religious. You know? We talk about that if we get

married that our kids will be raised Jewish. I want my kids raised with some kind of tradition, 'cause I just feel that, that sense of community that sense of tradition's important. I didn't have it and I wish that I had had, just that additional sense of community.

B: The spiritual?

K: Yes, but also social. Also just, this is what the family does on Friday nights, this, you know? (II, F206, p. 28)

She went on to explain:

K: But, you know, my parents I think are a little bit nervous if Mark and I get married and you know, I talked to them that I'll probably convert. And I think they're nervous, but I think it's also they grew up in a time where there was a lot more anti-Semitic discrimination and that kind of a thing and so, they're coming at it from their view points where things weren't open to Jews and I still think that there are some places like that, but I probably wouldn't join them for other reasons. Not just that [religious reasons], not because I couldn't but because I probably won't join a country club.

B: Um, hum.

K: You know? And so I'm okay if they're not gonna let me in [the elite organizations]. Like, I'll live, trust me! And so, I think my parents are just a little concerned that it might be closing the door to some things, but I think they also understand that I've pretty effectively already closed the door on those things as well. (II, F206, p. 29)

After her Teacher for America experience, Kimberly moved to Oakland, CA and taught special education for one year before moving to Austin, TX for her graduate studies. Kimberly received her Master's in Multicultural Special Education from the University of Texas at Austin and is currently in her second semester of doctoral work in Multicultural Special Education at the same University.

Portrait #6: Barbara

COMING TO THE STUDY…

During the Spring of 2003 while a Teaching Assistant for CCIMSE, I had many discussions with Dr. Morales about how we as teacher educators provide a space for transformation. I wanted to know how do we work toward facilitating a critical consciousness with our students? I became particularly fascinated as I observed the changes that occurred over the semester in the white female students' understanding of difference from the CCIMSE course. I compared my experiences

in the Organizing for Diversity Project and the outcomes of this course and wondered what about these students enabled them to have a shift. I wanted to know more about what these white women brought into the class as well as what about the course facilitated a shift in their thinking.

I began my search for answers by reviewing racial identity theory (Helms, 1990) as I thought that by looking at where the students were in relation to their racial identity development might shed light on to the types and extent of their shifts. However I found the theory problematic because of the temptation to fit my participants into a stage rather then allow the data to reveal or explain their shifts. In an email correspondence with Dr. Audrey Thompson from the University of Utah, she critiqued Helms work:

> However open-minded it [racial identity theory] might be meant to be, it does suggest that she [Helms] knows what the final outcome of anti-racism looks like for whites, ideally…I would contest this. I would say that it is not possible, in a racist society, to know what an ideal anti-racist white form of development would be. Inevitably, she has picked something that, at a particular place and time, looked ideal, and then worked backwards from it to arrive at the stages. All of the stages are interesting as descriptions, but I think they are dangerous as *pre*scriptions, because they lead whites to think that we can more or less "graduate" to a particular enlightened sensibility. (March 4, 2003)

I agree but then the question still remains how do we measure change in teacher beliefs or how do we measure raised awareness about systemic oppression and ethnocentric practice without discussing a continuum or process of raised awareness? I wondered if it might be more appropriate to capture this process in a way that demonstrated the simultaneousness and inability of "graduating" from racism but rather a re-balancing toward anti-racist practices. In my quest for

answers I spoke with two faculty members, Sofia Villenas and Ann Brooks. Dr. Brooks led me into transformative learning to examine the process of change and later into collaborative inquiry as a method for my study. Dr. Villenas led me into critical theory and feminist pedagogy as tools for framing my research.

WHO I WAS TO MY PARTICIPANTS

In order to give the reader an understanding of how I interacted with my participants and who I was to my participants; what follows is an account of who I was to my participants coming into the study. I excerpted quotes of myself sharing experiences about my life with participants during the individual interviews. Since I shared many different aspects about myself with participants during different moments in the interviews, I have constructed my portrait as a chronological account of my own history.

> *Yea, in my family, my mom was open when we were younger, but then when she got remarried, her husband was from more, like a middle class background, and we were raised, low poverty, after my mom got divorced from my dad, and we lived in the projects and, you know, we were on welfare. (II, F205, p.9)*

I talked with Jennifer about my experiences at the Fresh Air Mission Camp as a White camper with mostly African American children.

So my Mom would send us to this summer camp and there, there was primarily African American Hispanic, low SES and then kids with severe disabilities…so that was my first real exposure cause where I grew up there weren't there wasn't any diversity. It was low po [poor], low Whites, uh poor Whites with you know middle class Whites but not really you know upper class where I grew up. So we would go to this summer camp and that was my first experience with people of color, you know really I can remember like I totally like fit right in. I, I had a blast you know because they [the African American girls] were teaching me cheers they were teaching me call and response kinds of things they braided my hair you know.

J: [Laughing] yeah

B: I was just like totally into it because where I grew up I always felt so isolated because and there was mostly boys in my neighborhood and you know I had to be a tomboy and I had to be tough you know to survive and so when I went to this summer camp it was the first time I was like really surrounded by all girls. You know because they had separated the girls and the boys.

J: Oh, yeah, yeah

B: And so I just I loved, I embraced it even though like there were times where I can remember like a couple of the girls you know commenting like "oh, are you trying to be black." And you know me being like, "no you know but I, I'm into it who cares."

I continued to talk about my summer camp experiences with Amy as well.

And I went to a summer camp every year, which was like a Fresh Air Mission camp…I don't know if you know what that is? [Amy nods] But basically they serve, you know under privileged kids and so a lot of my friends were African American and Hispanic, but mostly African American. And [when I was a teenager] I started dating a lot [of boys of color], like I dated a couple kids who were Dominican, one Puerto Rican, African American, I never really had boyfriends that were White when I was in high school. And it became a bone of contention as the relationships became more serious and I got older. I remember my mom sitting me down one time and saying, you know, "What do you think the family's going to think?" Like, "I'm OK with it but what do you think other

people, you better really think long and hard about the person you want in your life, for the rest of your life." Kind of talk, and I just thought, "What?" You know? "How could you say this to me?" You're going to like him for who he is, not because of the color of his skin and how could you, you know, I've always had friends of color, like what's the big deal? So, for me it was always like, the thing that never got talked about but it was very clear that they weren't accepting of that. I don't know that my parents would be so much like that today if the person was educated, you know if the person was monetarily successful, they might think, oh, that's good for you, but like I dated this guy a while back who was a blue collar worker and my mom's like, "what are you doing with him?" Like, "You can do so much better than that!" You know, like, "You're educated, you're getting your PhD, you're going to be a professor." Like she still has these standards about what kind of person I should be dating or settled with. So, it's interesting… (II, F205, p. 9)

Amy went on to talk about how she had uncomfortable moments with her family around dating boys of color. I empathized as she explained a time when

she went on a date with a Hispanic boy but told her parents his last name was "smith" to cover up his identity.

> *You just didn't want it to be a hassle. But it is, it's always like, you walk that line, of what's acceptable and what's not, and it's like, why should it matter? And yet, you know, on the other hand, my mom will turn around and talk about civil rights or talk about, you know, equity, or things like that. So it's interesting, or that there's a certain level of acceptance, but not a complete inclusion. (II, F205, p. 10)*

When Amy and I talked about her frustration with vocational rehabilitation services and how expectations sometimes are lowered for special education students because people feel sorry for them; I shared a story that impacted how I treat individuals with disabilities.

> *I have a brother who's deaf, I think you knew that 'cause of the class I came and taught. And, when I was younger, I went to this camp. A Fresh Air Mission Camp, but it was also a camp for kids with severe and multiple disabilities as well. And I was a camper, it was probably like my first year there and there was this young boy named Darnell who, he was mixed, White and African American. We called him "Mulatto." And he had one eye that was like hazel and then he had one eye that*

was like blue/white, and it was like, kind of popped out of his head [not literally but it was how I remembered it]. And he was really tall and skinny. And he, I think had autism or some kind of, I didn't know for sure because I was young, but looking back [I think he had Autism]. And he would run around and kind of inappropriately touch people or kind of get a rise out of people by like touching people in weird places and it was really uncomfortable.

And I was, I was probably like 8 and we were all like waiting in line to get into the pool. And he was running around in one of his little fits and I was standing there chatting with a bunch of my friends. And all of the sudden I feel this hand go up my bathing suit, you know, when I turn around and I see him. I freaked out! And I like ran and I was like so petrified of him because a lot of the camp counselors had a real difficult time keeping him under control…he would like, you know start hitting himself or you know biting himself. And you know so it made me really uncomfortable.

And a few years later I went to the same camp, I kept going and like I was a camper. Then I worked as, what they call a

PC, which is a volunteer as a high school student 'cause you're too old to be a camper. So you go and you serve kids food and stuff. And then also you're expected to volunteer with the kids with disabilities and be their buddy during social times and like be their peer. Like you were saying the partners program…

I went back and I was a PC and it was our turn to pick a buddy, for social time, and who was my buddy going to be, and that camper [Darnell] was there, so he had grown 10 inches and was still taller than me and still scary to me. I had basically become very comfortable with all of the other kids with disabilities, but he, I was still petrified of him. And then I became his buddy and I realized that fear is just not a place that serves kids well. I took the time out to try to understand, why was he behaving this way and what was going on inside his head. And I think as a result of stepping back and trying to think from that perspective, like I've always, that's where I always meet people, is like trying to empathize. And kind of feel like, "Okay what is it like to be this person?" And "What are they thinking?"

That first time that I actually had an impact with him, we were in the Arts and Crafts Center. You know a lot of people, the way they treated him was basically really hard discipline like sit there, or don't move? You know or very strict with him and I was sitting there, I don't know if you know [boondoggle] like it's like that long plastic stuff that you like weave and you make bracelets and chains.

So I was sitting there making a necklace and he kept grabbing hand and I was like "No Darnell! Sit!" And like talking to him basically like a dog. And then I was like, you know what, what the heck? Why don't I teach him? I wonder if he'll learn? You know? And there I was, so I was like, oh you want to try huh? A little smart ass but basically I sat there and I taught him how to do boondoggle and from that point on, he knew and he learned all of these different stitches and he would sit there.

And I was just like, that moment in my life taught me so much about the power of expectation. Like how easy it would have been for him to keep grabbing me and for me to continue to push him away and put him in the corner until he could behave and then he could come out of time out versus, maybe he's

trying to communicate something to me? You know? Like going from totally being afraid of him to being like a teacher for him. [It] was a very powerful experience for me. (II, F205, p. 25)

I shared my relationship with my grandmother:

And a lot of my family got really turned off by my grandmother and I met her siblings through the years and I just, she's Polish, you know and she was like Czechoslovakian/Polish and her family in general, they're very stubborn and very critical and very, you know, I don't know, there was a roughness to them and yea, a lot of people in my family got really turned of by it and I just always accepted my grandma, like I knew that was who she was and it didn't bother me, you know. I mean it did a little bit, like if I didn't get the acceptance that I wanted from her, but in general like, I just knew that, that's the way she was, and I'd give it right back to her. You know what I mean? And so, I think you're right. Like, there are things that people can misperceive. So do you think, where there any activities or lectures or anything in class that kind of stood out

to you as sort of helping you kind of open your mind to those things or change your ideas. (II, F205, p.30)

When I first met Kimberly, I began by telling her:

B: As I described to you on the phone, I'm a doctoral student with Dr. Morales. Her and I've been working together for a long time actually. She's the reason why I came here, to the University. I used to be a bilingual speech [therapist] and I worked as a bilingual special educator in New Mexico. When I was out there I noticed that there were a lot of kids who were getting placed into special ed. or being referred to special ed. And I was questioning what was maybe more second language acquisition characteristics or characteristics of learning another culture versus a real disability. So, I got my Masters in bilingual special ed at the University of New Mexico and then I went on to come here and get my PhD because through my Master's program I just, kind of came up with more questions and realized that there's still a lot of work that needs to be done and one of the things that's really key. And you're actually one of the few participants who hasn't met me before

but most of the participants know all of this about me. I went and spoke to their class or I TA'd the class.

K: Okay

B: So I'm giving you a little bit more background than I've given other participants. They already know me. I've had the opportunity to work on some big research projects and I've also had the opportunity to do a lot of teacher workshops and one of the things that really strikes me through everything is the power of beliefs and expectations. And no matter what the intervention is, if the teachers don't really believe that the kids can learn or do all of that, it's not going to do a darn thing. (II, F206, p. 1)

I explained to Kimberly my experiences working in a rural school district:

Yea, when I taught in New Mexico I taught in a rural school in Northern New Mexico and, the attitude, we had 4% rate go on to college, most of that 4% being White and predominately, I mean it was like 90 something percent Hispanic. And, the pervasive perspective was that, "Well it doesn't really matter, these kids aren't gonna go anywhere anyway. They're not

gonna go to college, they're not gonna move out of this community." And I was appalled that people would have that perspective. Unless we start to change that or like you say, instill high expectations, then yea, it's not gonna change, but then I also struggled with it a lot because I also felt like who am I to come in here and say, "Oh, you guys need to get out of here." (II, F206, p. 31)

In talking with Caroline, I shared an emotional crisis I had in my journey toward a critical consciousness:

B: I never really critically thought about my whiteness until I got into grad school and…

C: So, kind of the way I was?

B: Yeah, and not really until I started working with Dr. Morales cause I participated in this um diversity training. They picked me to go across the country with them and talk about my experiences. And I remember was at the American Educational Research Association, a big, big conference and um we're supposedly like you know the model of this diversity training program.

J: Through UT or?

B: It was through UT, I was at, I was in New Mexico at the time when I went through it. But we went to AERA and I remember I attended like every single session on racism and prejudice and discrimination. And I was real gung ho and I was all about it you know. And I remember it was my turn to present and it was like a lump was in my throat and all the sudden eyes were on me, my audience was diverse, and I was a White girl talking about [pause] you know…

J: I got it, like how am I supposed to know about those kind of things?

B: Yeah, right exactly. You know I felt like I remember one of the participants. Because I kept talking about how there was this pervasive deficit perspective at my school. And how the teachers were just totally blaming the families for the you know what my, why the kids weren't learning and blaming it and it was like this woman was like well can you explain more of what you mean by deficit thinking? I remember she was an

African American woman and I know she was honestly wanting to know more.

J: Yeah

B: But, my anxiety level shot to the roof and I just couldn't talk and..

J: You felt a little defensive?

B: I did, [thinking] I felt very unsure and uncomfortable. And what I realized over time by reading like Beverly Tatum's work and reading other people's work about this [race]. Our culture doesn't talk about it [race] enough to the point where we think it's bad. (II, S201, p. 41)

I went on to explain my own understanding of anxiety in communicating with others.

because it's like even though I know that I have a really raised awareness about things and I am moving in the right direction but it is uncomfortable and it's because it gets at your core. You know it's about everything you have been socialized to believe and it's real ea, and I find that it you know it's almost

like when you are trying to manage your anxiety you want to move toward the comfort which is the familiar which is what you know and when people are presenting you with well it's because you are different that's why there's the problem then you go okay yeah you are right. It is because we're different and you just let it go. But rather than maintaining that critical piece of yourself and saying, no there's something more going on here and I want to find out what it is and I'm not scared to learn about more. And I think we are really afraid as a society to really think about it. You know and rightfully so because it's uncomfortable civil rights you know that was a really trying time in our country and I think it's still you know in a lot of ways it's still happening and we are not talking about it enough. (II, S201, p. 42)

I also talked with Jennifer about my personal journey in dealing with my Whiteness.

Because we have been socialized to sort, I mean as Whites anyway like I can speak from my own experiences you know I up until I had some really shocking experiences and then going through diversity training I did think that White was normal

and that everybody wanted to be you know that we were all striving to be in the Middle class. You know and striving for better things but as I have gotten older I realize wait a minute that's just one way of knowing and so there's constant times where I'm bumping up against this I don't know if I want to call it like a culture wall or what but it's like ew all the sudden it hits me and I am like uh why is this happening to me again? (II, F202, p. 13)

I recalled how I felt after taking CCIMSE in the Summer of 2003.

Well, I remember after taking Dr. Morales's class, one of the things that really struck me, and I still struggle with this is, I notice where I choose to go out, where I choose to eat, I'm always surrounded by mostly White people. For such a diverse city, I'm hardly in a crowd where I'm the minority. (II, F206, p. 35)

CHAPTER 5: OUR COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING

The findings in this chapter are a result of two collaborative inquiries in which we first shared our life stories as they relate to our understanding of difference and second made meaning of the data to develop our collective response to the research questions. What follows is a collective, polyvocal understanding of the ways in which we [White women in education] constructed and re-constructed our understanding of difference in education, particularly related to race/ethnicity, language, social class, and ability, as a result of our engagements with CCIMSE and our broader life experiences. A polyvocal writing method means that *my* voice does not always frame or situate each theme or finding but rather through the collection and collaboration of data analysis the women through the representation of quotes are situating and framing themes as well. In particular, this chapter explores the themes we developed collaboratively to gain insight about (a) aspects of our life experiences that shape our understanding of difference and (b) aspects of the course that influenced our changed perspective about difference.

Sections of the findings are not always indicative of a consensus type understanding but rather a collective understanding, which provides space for individual experience. In following a feminist perspective, I hold that there is not one way of knowing but rather a polyvocal way of understanding (Lather, 1991). Hatch (2002) describes polyvocal analysis as a process of exposing multiple voices for a given phenomena. Similarly, as an educator when I enter a classroom

of students, I know that my teaching practices may or may not meet the needs of every learner but I employ multiple modes of instruction in an effort to meet the needs of each learner separately within different respective moments. Some call this practice differentiated instruction. For the sake of metaphor, I term it polyvocal teaching. With this logic in mind, I recognize that as an educator my goal is not to meet the needs of only one individual learner but rather the collective of individual learners. Similarly, as a researcher my goal is not merely to present consistent patterns across the data but also individual patterns that contribute to the collective understanding. In borrowing from Hatch (2001),

> [I am] operating within a paradigmatic framework [feminist in nature] that assumes that multiple understandings of events, activities, and phenomena are not just possible, but inevitable. [I am] not searching for a Truth in any one story, but trying to bring out as many truths as are salient to [my] examination. (p. 204)

Thus the stories I have strung together to represent themes across and within our life stories are connected to what I am attempting to understand about the phenomena. In this case the two genres of phenomena or what I am studying are aspects of our life experiences that shape how we understand difference and aspects of the course that influenced a shift in our thinking about difference in relation to our life stories and engagements in CCIMSE. As a result, what follows is a collective, polyvocal account of our responses to the research questions.

Aspects of our life experiences that shape our understanding of difference

In this section I explore themes we developed as we told and re-told our life stories in the process of understanding aspects of our life experiences that

shape our understanding of difference in education. The way in which we shared our experiences contributed to our (a) limited understanding of difference in relation to our white identity to where Whiteness was viewed as an ideal and (b) critical perspectives that illuminated interruptions or contradictions of previously held beliefs toward a critical consciousness of difference in education.

WHITENESS AS AN IDEAL

In this section I explore how our experiences growing up contributed to our previously held misunderstandings or lack of awareness of difference. While all participants now report having shifted these understandings I offer this discussion as a tool for understanding the importance of exploring our previously held beliefs in an effort to understand those who may still have such beliefs. What follows is an account of the factors that we reported as contributing to our misunderstandings or lack of awareness of difference in relation to our White identity. Some participants who were raised in higher socio-economic status experienced their white identity as normalized because they had "sheltered experiences" with difference that served to reify their whiteness rather than interrupt it. Other participants who were raised in lower socioeconomic status realized that they did not have full access to their white identity but that whiteness was seen as an ideal to be achieved. A third theme that emerged was our emotional readiness to be able to think critically about difference. Our emotional readiness affected our ability to step outside of our white identity and recognize the implications our whiteness had on our understanding of difference.

Being surrounded by Whiteness

Of the six participants, Kimberly, Caroline and Jennifer were raised in upper middle class environments. Their schooling experiences and friendship circles were primarily White. While they all experienced secondary schooling in more diverse environments, they were tracked so their classmates and friendship circles were still primarily from White upper middle class backgrounds.

> *Kimberly: I didn't have any experience when I was young child of meeting anyone that was different. Um, it was a very kind of well-to-do neighborhood everyone that in my elementary school there was you know maybe one African American girl and that was it. Um, just you know it was pretty sheltered…Um, then my middle school, um became you know several elementary schools feeded into one middle school. And it was all of the sudden half African American and half white. And you know it was kind of a, a culture shock, for me and looking back on it, it was [pause] very interesting looking at how the teachers treated us differently. And all of my teachers were White um, [pause] and just kind of like there was no mixing [pause] of the races. You know um, you sat on different sides of the cafeteria. I think part of that had to do with the fact that you still stuck with the people you knew…I was in the*

honors classes and there really weren't a whole lot of African American kids in my classes um. And so it was just kind of again I just kind of stayed in my little course and didn't really think about race at all. OR think about difference.

And then, my high school um became even more diverse… And that's when I kind of started noticing about different [pause] races; um [pause] I was in the honor's track program in there too. And again the classes looking back, mm, my school was 40%…White. And my classes were pretty much a 100% white. And loo, and you know it's I like I had no, and no idea that [pause]. That it was that kind of, that there was tracking going on to that extent. You know I was just kind of, "oh yeah and I had the same people in all of my classes" but looking back it's like how could I never have classes with people that weren't white except for like in my Spanish classes? Those weren't tracked. (CI1, F206, p. 1-2)

Caroline: Similar to Kimberly, I don't think I really started growing up and figuring out who I was until I was like 23. Because you know I lived in this White neighborhood, and I went to you know a Methodist Church. And I was into all that

mainstream stuff like cheerleading and choir. And you know my parents were loving and supportive [laughing]. I went to college and I was in a Sorority and my college was White and conservative for the most part…So, um like the whole way through my life I never had to think about anything [difference] and yeah it was around me and the older I got the more I saw it. You know like in my high school and my junior high I saw more diversity but it still never really affected me. Because once again the tracking and that kind of thing, those people weren't in my classes. So I guess what you could say really is that I lived in a little bubble…(CI 2, F201)

Jennifer was home schooled so her mother determined the peers who became her friends. She explained that similar to Kimberly and Caroline, she was primarily surrounded by White growing up as a result her social circle was comprised of Whites.

Jennifer: And so she [my mother] could hand pick who we could be friends with, so we didn't really get the choice to for I guess who we would align ourselves with socially, it was just sort of who my mom thought would be a good playmate. And whose parents she liked, really.

So, we did a lot of athletics and gymnastics and year round swim and things like that. So most of our friends came from either music lessons or sporting things. And they were all pretty much like us, White, upper class and really, hearing all of your stories made me think. I just really didn't meet anyone that wasn't JUST like me until we moved. So by the time you're fourteen, your identity is somewhat established a little bit. (CI1, S202, p. 1)

Sheltered Exposure to Difference

For Caroline, Jennifer, and Kimberly it was not encouraged to "mix" or intermingle with people of color except on a superficial level or through volunteer activities. As a result, the Whiteness of their peers was "normalized."

Kimberly: It was interesting, even though I was friends with these girls and guys [in my Spanish class who were Puerto Rican] we never did anything outside of the class together. Like it was like yes we said hello to each other in the hallways and [pause] you know if I ran into them at the football game but never be like "Hey let's go out to dinner tonight." OR something like that.

My [pause] friends were all white. Um and that was everyone that I hung out with after school and on weekends were white. And, some of that has to do with just you know, my two best friends in the world until this day were girls I met the first day of first grade. You know so it's like part of that had to do with I had known them my entire life. And you know you kind of hang with people that are like you.

Jennifer: [When we moved to South Texas] I went to public school, so it was just ridiculous the change. I mean it was just like "What has happened?" Mexican American, 80% of my High School. They hated me, I mean it was awful. Like the first day, three or four girls were like, "We're going to beat you up, bitch." I had no idea. I was like, "What in the world is going on?" And the counselor met with my mom and it was like "I think there might be some racial things."

And my parents were feeling it, because we're Catholic and the church had I think four or five white families and the rest were Mexican, Mexican Americans. And my mom wasn't really fitting in with the social crowd very well, so I think she kind of knew. But it was hard. And so I met this group of people who

ultimately ended up being the top ten of our class, who were all White, three girls and seven guys. And pretty much through High School that was my social crowd, basically. (CI1, S202, p. 7)

Jennifer shared that her experience with people who were racially or economically different occurred mainly around volunteer events such as working at the local soup kitchen or visiting nursing homes. So the message was sent that it was a good to help people who are different but that you did not develop personal relationships with "them."

Like I think they just created boundaries around how close we got to people that were different… I think if I had to sum it up, just by, I think, making us as sheltered as we were just sent the message of [pause] I think it was really very class related, like helping with money, helping with time but not friendships, not bridging it in that way. (CI1, S202, p. 7)

Amy was raised in a middle class environment and her parents came from a working class background. Unlike Kimberly, Caroline, and Jennifer, Amy's schooling experiences provided her opportunities to befriend many people of color from a variety of class differences. However she did experience a sheltered understanding of difference in regards to difference outside the US from international backgrounds.

Amy: As a child I was confused by certain cultures because when my Dad would travel places [for work] we would get to go stay with him in the summer. But he only picked certain places that we could go. And I think like if he was in China, Japan or Saudi Arabia, those were places he didn't let us go. But if it was like Europe or Canada, like more White cultures and stuff. I guess like that is kind of how I saw it, like that were still kind of the same. You know it was okay to travel there. (CI2, F205)

As a result she developed a negative perception of people from places (e.g., Asian and Middle Eastern countries) that were seen as taboo to travel. To reinforce these negative perceptions her father would return from these countries with video that portrayed aspects of their culture that Amy found offensive. Amy also talked about how being immersed in a culture overseas had a more positive impact on her perceptions than only being exposed to one or two people from a different culture in the United States. For example her cousins from Switzerland who were the same age would change into their swimsuits in public. In Europe this was "natural" and Amy did not question their behavior but when they were in the United States she explained that she was embarrassed by this behavior. She reflected that if she had had exposure to more people from the Asian countries that she probably would have developed a more positive understanding of their culture.

Whiteness as an Ideal to be Achieved

Renee and I were raised in lower socioeconomic status, which affected how we were accepted in school. As a result, we had friends from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, both of us discussed how Whiteness was idealized, it was seen as something we did not have but were striving to attain.

> *Barbara: My mom was trying to go back to school to get a degree and she wanted to become a nurse so she could make a decent salary and provide for us and, you know, very similar to Renee, I mean, the pain like it was something that I don't think I ever really dealt with until I became an adult because I always, I was so much like you like I just always wanted to be on the other side. You know, I always wanted to be the rich kid, I wanted to have the two parents, I wanted to come home at night and have my mom to hug me rather than finding my mom locked up in her room crying. I wanted to have that normal life.*

Renee talked about dating a boy in high school from a "very wealthy background" made her realize what she did not have and what she wanted.

> *Renee: They [my boyfriend and his family] have more money, they have nice things, like I said earlier when you were talking*

I was like, you know, man I always want that when I was little. I always wanted to be comfortable. (CI 1, F204, p. 6)

While Renee and I recognized that we benefit from being White, having money and privilege was something we strived to have and yet as adults we still don't feel like we will ever "fit in."

Barbara: I always felt outside and never felt inside and I always felt left out and so what happened as a result I had friends from everywhere. I just was friends with everybody because I couldn't deal with that rejection like, I don't know how to explain it, but that's what it felt like and so I was one of those people that everybody loved, you know. It was kind of like the way I am [now]. Everybody knows me pretty much. (CI 1, S200, p. 5)

Renee explained that while now as an adult she lives a middle class lifestyle she still does not identify.

Renee: And that's been really hard for me because I don't feel, I don't feel like, even though I live in a nice house now, I live with nice neighbors, and you basically grew up with, something that I always wanted, I don't feel like I can identify with them, I don't, I still see myself as my mom's daughter and

as working at Wal-Mart and just working and living to get by…But, now I am comfortable [financially] and I think God my husband works hard for me to be like that but I still, I'm not there. I don't identify. (CI 1, F204, p. 6)

Growing up we believed in meritocracy and that if we worked hard we would attain the rewards of the middle class. We saw Whiteness as an ideal to be achieved that our problems would be solved if we could have money, have "normal" life with the "right" clothes and looks. However both Renee and I, while living a more middle class lifestyle, still feel like we will never fit in even though on the outside looking in one would not recognize this about us. We both still struggle with our body image and feelings of beauty. In part this is due to how we were treated as a result of our class differences and the teasing we experienced when we were younger because we did not dress or look like our peers.

Emotional Readiness

In this section, I present data from Caroline who admittedly came into CCIMSE having negative perceptions of difference. In telling and [re]telling her story each time Caroline came to a new deeper understanding of "what went wrong" with her experiences. In the second inquiry she begins with a new insight that before she began working at Booker middle school where she had had a very negative teaching experience, her boyfriend of one year was killed in a rock climbing accident. Shortly before he was killed, they had talked about getting

married. So when she started teaching in an environment that was unfamiliar the discomfort overwhelmed her.

> *Caroline: That [my boyfriend being killed] and then taking the negative job situation and experiencing being you know the discrimination and being called names and seeing you know what it's actually like to have that happen to you. I had never experienced that [discrimination] I had always been around people that were the same as me and all of the sudden I was a minority. And that was just really hard. I was just kind of in a bad place already and then you pile everything else on top and, I was just crushed.*
>
> *For a while there I just couldn't teach again I was in therapy because of all of these things that were going on. I just was messed up.*
>
> *And you know then things started to get better and then I met Richard and that killed it all again.*
>
> *Barbara: And Richard was…*
>
> *Caroline: The Hispanic guy that was very abusive.*

Barbara: So do you think that your experience at Booker was shaped by the depression that had already set in?

Caroline: Oh yes definitely! Yeah and I think I was already just in a bad place and just being really selfish you know. I mean I was just so focused on me and my problems and then I come into this situation where everyone else has a lot of problems and their problems are way bigger than mine was but um, I still was just so focused on me and it just made everything so much worse.

And um I just feel like I wasn't able to communicate well with anyone and so I don't know I mean.

In making meaning of the data during the second inquiry, Kimberly explains that she notices a pattern after hearing Jennifer discuss the themes of her story.

Kimberly: I thought it was interesting what she [Jennifer] said about you have to be ready. You have to be in a place where, all of us for a long time weren't in certain places so therefore couldn't deal with the things that were going on and it wasn't until you are in a place where you are ready to kind of deal

with that and it's almost like everything else in your life has to be going well in order to be able to kind of confront those things. You know like, Because when Caroline was at…what school was it?

Caroline: Booker

Kimberly: You weren't ready you couldn't have dealt with all of that. You know.

Caroline: and it was a much more negative experience because of

Kimberly: Yeah, you had so much on your plate that you, that was would have been just you would have exploded

Caroline: [Laughing - shaking her head yes - I did explode]

Kimberly: So therefore we had to be in really kind of positive places [feeling good about ourselves] to deal with that.

After hearing Kimberly pinpoint the theme of emotional readiness, I began to reflect on how participants discussed not really being able to understand difference until they were in college.

> *Jennifer: But then again, I didn't understand, I really didn't think deeply about it until college. Till I had an awareness for understanding these experiences.*

It seems that while we all had varied experience with difference the meaning making of our experiences did not occur until we were college-aged in our twenties.

> *Barbara: But it wasn't until I got into college that I really started dealing with racism and the way our tracking system and institutional racism and all these things…I definitely think I got the class thing. But the race thing was difficult. (CI1, S200, p. 6)*

As a result we all agreed that we had to come to a point of emotional readiness before we could feel comfortable about ourselves and thus develop a deeper level of awareness about difference toward a critical consciousness.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF DIFFERENCE

In this section I explore the ways our sheltered understanding of difference was interrupted which illuminated a critical perspective of difference. Some of us experienced these interruptions as young children growing up in lower socioeconomic status or through our schooling experiences with people who were racially and economically different while others of us did not experience such

interruptions until adulthood. The themes that emerged were experiences of being uncomfortable, recognizing differential treatment, and influential relationships.

Being an Outsider – Learning from Discomfort

> *Kimberly: You have to be able to get out of your comfort zone and be challenged in that way or be; you know it's like easy to just be around other people that look like you.*
>
> *Barbara: So, do you think that's what has made a difference for you, is having had the experience of being uncomfortable and*
>
> *Kimberly: Realizing it's not all that bad.*
>
> *Barbara: Um, hum.*
>
> *Kimberly: That you still live.*
>
> *Barbara: Um, hum.*
>
> *Kimberly: And that you make friends and that, you know… (II, F206, p. 36)*

After reviewing her transcripts and coding for themes, Kimberly made the following note in the margin next to the above quote:

> *Being made uncomfortable really can cause you to have to examine yourself, your way of viewing the world, your way of communicating – if you always stay in your comfort zone you can take all these things for granted because most people around you share them [the same lifestyle]. (II notes, F206, p 36)*

We discussed how being as outsider or the experience of being different led to feelings of being uncomfortable, which facilitated a shift in thinking more critically about difference and recognizing how individuals are treated according to their differences. What follows are sub-categories to organize the different ways we came to feel uncomfortable as a result of being outsiders.

Living Difference on the Margins of Class

Renee and I fluctuated between working class and below the poverty line during our early years and were raised by our mothers in a single parent home, which placed us as outsiders with our peers and during our schooling experiences.

> *Renee: I don't really like to talk about my childhood very much; it's not something that I look back on as being happy.*

> *My brother and I were chastised, kicked, taunted on the bus, it was, we spent most of our, like, young, younger childhood and adolescence running out of the way because so many people*

made fun of us because we didn't wear the right clothes, they were from Wal-Mart. I was really tall and so was my brother and we always had jeans that were up to here [motioning to her mid-calf].

And my mom couldn't afford anything else and she didn't have the time to go look for anything else so back during that time there was never really any focus on school, achievement, grades, it was just about daily living

Barbara: I had a very painful childhood; as well…my father was extremely abusive...So we had to leave in the middle of the day while my dad was at work. He was [a security guard at the local prison] and he got a lot more privileges [because of his law enforcement connections], which didn't allow us to get the protection that we needed. And so, my mom made the decision to leave my father. And what that meant was that we went from working class to poverty. And I was raised in the projects on welfare. It was a huge struggle for me because I was constantly being faced with being misunderstood in school. It was very painful as a child to go to school in hand-

me-down clothes that didn't match. Kids making fun of me. Never feeling like I fit in. (CI1, S200, p.1)

As a result I began to re-think how class has affected who I am today both personally and in relation to my understanding of how difference influences how we are treated. In particular I shared a story of how I was treated by a school nurse, which served to undermine my home life experiences.

Barbara: I realize that class has really played a role in shaping me as an individual and my resiliency and my kind of pushing the system all the time, and questioning. Those are really experiences of being discriminated against and that pain, and those misconceptions. Like I can remember one of my school nurses, I came to school one day and I was freezing, I had forgot to put my jacket on to come to school because I was going to be late and I had two different colored socks on and I was a wreck. I had a lot of anxiety when I was a child because of the experiences I had.

And I remember getting to school and her being like, "Oh, you poor thing. Oh let me take you home and we'll get you warm clothes." And, on the one hand it was seductive because I felt, like, wow she's giving me that love that I want. But, on the

other hand, she wanted to come home and see my living conditions. She wanted to see if my mom really cared about me and it made me feel violated. Like, how dare you? My mom loves me. She cares about me. No, she's not there all the time, and yes, she works hard, but it's not because she doesn't care, it's because she does care and she got us away from a really difficult situation. And, you know, it's so much more complicated than what you think. And, just her accusatory, like you don't have a mom that cares about you because she couldn't put your jacket on for you in the morning…I realized that my whole childhood, I was pitted against my family because we were poor. Because it wasn't the "right" way. There was a dissonance between me and my family. (CI1, S200, p. 3)

As a result of our experiences of feeling like an outsider because of our class difference during our youth, we developed an awareness of differential treatment that has motivated us to be mindful in how we treat others.

Across Racial Lines

Amy described how in her schooling experience at the magnet school that was located in a more diverse section of town made her recognize how she was different.

Amy: When you do see yourself as being different like when I was the only white child in my class and stuff. And just maybe seeing how you are like maybe treated differently. And have everyone want to be your friend because you were different and get to know you. Like even kind of questions they would ask, like when you would go to the dance and stuff everyone wanted to be your partner but do you dance?

Similarly when Jennifer's family re-located to South Texas where she attended a school that was primarily Latino, she was able to recognize her difference in relation to feeling like an outsider.

Jennifer: But when we moved to South Texas was when it all just kind of came crashing down because there weren't a lot of people like us there.

A really good friend of mine Elizabeth who I met in South Texas when I was going through this experience of being an outsider. But she was half Irish/Mexican American and she was going through her own kind of racial identity crisis I would call it. Because she didn't, she felt like she was an outsider growing up Mexican in South Texas because she really identified more with her Mom's Irish background. She

[Elizabeth] grew up in Seattle and moved back to Texas about the same time as I did. So I felt like an outsider, she looked like she should be apart of the ingroup but she didn't feel that connection racially and so we both were kind of set apart in that way. And we had a lot of conversations about it. (CI2, S202)

Kimberly talked about her feelings of being an outsider when she worked for the Department of Social Services with youth who had very different life experiences than she had had growing up and then living in Mississippi working in a primarily African American elementary school.

Kimberly: And then when I started working for the department of social services and none of my kids looked like me. None of my kids had the same experiences that I had. What I had just taken for granted that everybody kind of had the same background. All of the sudden it was like, "oh no they don't!" And that there were differences and that I was all of the sudden the one that was different. You know I was the outsider. And I was very cognizant like wow all of the sudden I am in the minority. And then of course moving to Mississippi where I really was a minority in just about every aspect of my life. You

know so just those experiences of really being made aware of who I was and what shaped me and also how I was different than other people. (CI2, F206)

Kimberly: I think going to Mississippi and walking in my first staff meeting and for the first time, I was the minority. Even though people were very welcoming and very open and willing to help me in whatever ways, you still notice…You know? And now every time I walk in a room I make a mental tally of who all's there. (II, F206, p. 35)

In the second collaborative inquiry Kimberly explained how her experience feeling uncomfortable as a racial minority while working for the Department of Social Services and in the Mississippi Delta gave her a new perspective on what it feels like to be on the "outside."

Kimberly: Those two experience where I was suddenly out of my comfort zone and I couldn't rely on my background knowledge to get me in places, I couldn't rely on having connections with people just based on certain physical characteristics or stuff like that. Like all of the sudden I was the one that lived the outsider and I was uncomfortable it made me really grow. (CI2, F206)

Seeing Differential Treatment

In this section, I discuss our collective experiences seeing differential treatment of others outside of our own identity. The examples are illustrated across a variety of aspects of difference to include race, ethnicity, and ability.

Race

Kimberly worked for Social Services during her undergraduate studies with students who were in the juvenile court system either through foster care or had been in trouble with the law. Most of the students she worked with were African American. She recalled driving around the community with three or four African American students in her car and stopping for gas.

> *Kimberly: And it was kind of the first time that I really [pause] you know would find myself being a minority. You know all of the sudden here I was driving around three thirteen year old black guys. You know and really just kind of be like, huh? So and you know just I found that I really enjoyed interacting with them. Even though these were kids that supposedly like, I mean I could see the looks that they got when we would, I'd stop and get gas. And they would go into the store and I'd watch the store people just really kind of monitor their behavior.*

And part of it was justified I mean these were kids that had been convicted of a crime like. You know, but then also part of it was like some of them had been convicted of truancy. Well, I had friends that skipped school every day in high school and never once got arrested for truancy [in disbelief]. You know where these kids skipped school twice and all of the sudden they were arrested. And you know it was just kind of making me realize that I never kind of got followed through the store. Or you know, just kind of looking at that and realizing that we were just treated differently. And but not really sure just what to make of it all.

Similarly Amy talked about how many of her friends from African American and Latino backgrounds were treated differently in school and she thought that contributed to their drop-rates and lack of achievement in school.

Because I think a lot of my friends by the time we were out of junior high, a lot of them had ended up in alternative schools and stuff….or just didn't quite make it through school. Because maybe life circumstances but I don't think…they didn't have supportive families because I had been in their family. I think sometimes its just…in the way you are treated

and you get tired of it. Or you know you're kind of labeled the bad kid. (CI1, F205, p. 3).

In the margin of her transcript to the above quote Amy wrote:

I don't think they choose to quit. They were not bad kids. (CI 1 Notes, p 3)

Amy came to the realization that her peers were treated differently than she was because of the color of their skin and that the expectations were different. She talked about how her friends of color would get into trouble for things that she believed she would not have gotten in as much trouble.

Amy: For one, I think that a lot of times they were speaking up for themselves and defending themselves. One of the things in sixth grade I had this older white teacher…[who] embarrassed me in front of the class. And my friend Maria…stook [sic] up for me. She kind of basically told the teacher to shut up and leave [me] alone…and she got expelled for a few days…if I would have done it I wouldn't have gotten in as much trouble.

Kimberly explained that she really didn't begin to understand how race influenced the way people were treated until she lived in the Mississippi Delta where she taught for Teach for America.

That living in Mississippi was just kind of the first time that I really realized what it meant to be White. And kind of like the privileges it got me. (CI1, F206, p. 10)

Her first encounter with differential treatment across race lines occurred when an African American couple who was also in Teach for America were not eligible for the same housing because of the color of their skin.

Houses that were available for me to rent, all of the sudden were not available for [them] to rent. And it's like, "wait a second, you would rather have." And I was at the time, you know living with my boyfriend. And like, they would rather have my boyfriend and I who were 23 and you know rather have the two of us kids living together than have this family where the guy was putting off law school to do this. His wife was also a teacher…And they couldn't rent a house. You know all of the sudden houses weren't available to rent. And it was just kind of like, "Does this really happen? Like could this really be happening?

Her second experience occurred around her relationship with the Mayor who was African American and did not receive the same treatment because of his language difference.

Like I said the Mayor was um, African American and he has a very thick Mississippi, um African American accent… But you know here he was, he was the Mayor of this town. Um, the young, one of the youngest Mayor's who'd been 32 when he was first elected. You know, so a young guy and had spent his whole life in the Delta. And when he had to make calls outside of Mississippi and outside of the Delta, he often asked me to make those calls. Because he knew that, you know, me getting on the phone and having a white voice would lead to different things. And I was like, "He's the mayor! Like shouldn't that be more powerful than my 22 year-old self?" You know, like and it just really kind of [pause] taught me that even the sound of my voice would lead to people treating me differently on the phone.

Kimberly said that the combination of these two examples brought to the forefront white privilege.

It just really made me kind of realize um, what, what my being white got for me. You know kind of what those, I had read all stuff about white privilege but there it was like, I can rent a house that my friend Jerome cannot rent. And I can call

someone on the phone and my friend the Mayor can't. You know and get a different reaction and that just really kind of stuck with me. (CI1, F206, p. 10)

Ethnicity

Amy talked about how she was exposed to prejudice with in her family because her grandmother was from Australia.

I think my Grandmother had a big impact on that too because there was a lot of prejudice and separation in my family. Like nobody from my Grandfather's side would talk to him because you know he married someone from another country. And my grandma always threw that in my grandfather's face you kind of she left her country to come over here to be with him. And just how she would get treated differently and stuff. And I don't know, I think this class helped me understand my grandmother more and kind of have more respect for her. (CI 2, F205)

I had a similar experience with my Grandmother's side of the family being from Poland. There was always this tension that my Grandmother was rude or more abrasive. I can remember the first time I met my Great Uncle who had the same mannerisms as my grandmother very forthright and opinionated. It made me

realize that this was part of their ethnic heritage. So I asked my mother who said that all of the siblings behaved that way.

Ability

Amy and Barbara talked about seeing differential treatment across disabilities. In particular Amy witnessed her friend, Marcy, with a visual impairment being treated differently in a course they took together.

> *Amy: And then like a class we took last semester, you know like our professor gave her, we had like a case thing to do, you know and everybody got like a 40 page assignment and he didn't, he gave her like a 5 page assignment. You know, it was just like little things that you know and then she's kind of, you know when we're talking about it, she's like well, why did you get that one [40-page assignment], why did I get this [5-page assignment]? I guess just kind of see internally like, what she goes through…*
>
> *Kind of what she still struggles with now, you know like how people put those lower expectations on her and how hard it is… that is hard, you know, just kind of having to justify yourself all the time. You know, well I can do this, why aren't you expecting me to do it? Even like when it was a lot of group*

work and stuff, you know and then kind of not including her, or making her get up in front of people and she goes, you know well I can do this dah dah dah dah, you know? And then when she does, she does good and people are and then everybody claps after. So nobody claps for anybody else.

I shared examples of how my brother who is Deaf was treated differently because people misunderstood his deafness.

Barbara: People were constantly misunderstanding him, thinking he was stupid, thinking he was misbehaving. His experiences at school, were at some points very good but at some points they were really horrible because they wanted to put him into special education and my mom had to fight for his right to not be put into special ed. (CI1, S200, p.1)

Amy also shared how Marcy is treated differently around campus.

Amy: And just like, when she does come [down the hallway], everybody goes to the side or acts like it's a bigger deal, or just kind of, I don't know.

)

Influential Relationships

We discussed key people in our lives that influenced our perspective toward a critical and more mindful understanding of difference. They included family members, mentors, and people across race and ability lines.

Family Members

Jennifer shared that her father taught her to question and be critical.

> *Jennifer: [My father] is the person that taught me to be able to converse about things like this by being open to my questions…And when he was younger he would be really probing of me like "why do you think that? Tell me more about that?" Was kind of his approach. (CI2, F202)*

Upon reflection after she had reviewed her transcripts, Jennifer explained how her family taught her to be empathetic to difference.

> *Jennifer: But for me as a child, it really taught me to empathize with other people and especially growing up in a large family and being the oldest. We had a lot of privilege but in terms of sharing and giving to other people and seeing other people's perspective. You have to do that in a large family. Um so that's a really critical piece of the way I think about difference.*

I learned how to empathize and I think something that I have heard from a lot of you all is that you've learned that at some point in your life too. And for me that is really critical in meeting this process and understanding difference is that ability and desire to empathize and then to think critically about what you do. (CI2, F202)

I learned to be critical and have a sense of self-advocacy from both my mother and my brother who were teaching me coping skills to "overcome" our circumstances by questioning authority and that, which oppressed us. Amy talked about how her mother instilled the value of accepting difference across ability.

I think my mother had a huge impact on my life too because she was open-minded to different people and stuff. And advocating I put down there. It think she advocated for the independence of people with disabilities and stuff. Like kind of encouraging them to live on their own to increase their independent skills and stuff. Like we had a group home that was kind of like on the other side of us. I know one day we like drove by and there was this guy, basically playing with himself naked in the yard. You know and instead of my mom going, "Oh my gosh, this is the worst thing" you know. She just

stopped the car. She told me and my friend to cover our eyes. And went inside and you know kind of helped him up and stuff and took him in there. And saying "You should not make fun of him." You know, "You teach somebody the difference from right or wrong"…She taught me how to advocate for people. Instead of talking bad about them, help them. (CI 2, F205)

For me, my brother was a key figure in my life because he took care of me and instilled a sense of hope to overcome our circumstances of being poor and having a father who was abusive.

Barbara: I can remember being around a lot of unhappy people when I was a child and the one solace I had was my deaf brother because he didn't always have to hear what went on and he was someone who instilled a sense of hope for me and faith about becoming a good person.

Like he, from a very early age, he would tell me constantly, we're going to get out of here some day. We're going to make something of our lives. (CI2, S200)

Additionally, similar to Amy, my mother was very compassionate towards people with disabilities and taught us to be advocates and fight the system as a way to help us cope with the injustices we experienced.

Mentors

Renee said that the influential people in her life were teachers or mentors she had growing up and in college. When she was in high school, her journalism teacher was very influential in teaching Renee about accepting others and developing advocacy.

> *Renee: She opened up a cultural world for me and I think my educational world. I didn't have any self-esteem that I was good at grades or I was good at school. I wasn't a cheerleader. I wasn't a jock. I wasn't a member of sports. I wasn't good at drama. But she told me I could write. And I thought that I'm just going to go for it. (CI1, S204, p. 5)*

> *And I would win all these awards at journalism contests and that just really helped my self-confidence. And she was the first person that just opened my eyes to the world. She was really strong about, um, promoting AIDS and what was going on with homosexuality and stuff. (II, S204, p. 6)*

Renee also talked about relationships with two of her college professors.

Across Race lines

Amy attended schools in the poorer section of town where there were more people of color. Most of her friends were primarily from Latino and African

American backgrounds. She had friends from high SES to from lower SES. As a result she learned that we all have advantages and disadvantages.

> *Amy: I think too, going to different people's houses and seeing the family's culture. If it was a big family or it was a small family and even single parent families. It think that kind of shaped me into seeing how different people lived and that there isn't necessarily one right way or wrong way…And like friends and stuff, like even from lower to higher socio-economic backgrounds. Like I know some of my friends from higher economic status went through college and stuff and now have jobs but feel like a big failure because they cannot afford the clothes or same lifestyle as when their parents supported them. And that just helped me to see that there is a challenge of like no matter where you come from. Like if you have money if you don't have money what color you are. (CI2, F205)*

I talked about my experiences attending a Fresh Air Mission summer camp, which was the first time I met and had relationships with people of color. I was nine years old the first time I attended this camp.

> *Barbara: But when I went to this summer camp, it was the first time I was exposed to African-American and Hispanic children and it was probably, I would say, 80 to 90% African-American*

and Latino, mostly African American. And so it was the first time I experienced being a racial minority. I always experienced being a social economic minority but what was so amazing was it was the first time I felt embraced as me. I loved it. I mean they taught me cheers. They braided my hair. They cared for me. You know, I dated, I had boyfriends. You know, I mean it was like "Oh my God, I fit in." (CI1 S200, p. 4)

As a result when I entered high school I became good friends with the few African American students at my school. I felt more accepted and that I could really be myself around my friends of color. We had a common bond of feeling like outsiders even though our experiences were still very different.

Barbara: I mean I do see there were a lot of ways I was unaware even though I could empathize and I know what it feels like to be discriminated against, that's very different as a white person because I can choose. I have more options as a White person. (CI1, F200, p. 6)

Jennifer shared her experiences as a Resident Assistant in a dorm on campus and the relationships she had with students from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds. In particular, one student who was African American talked about her struggle with racial identity.

And one girl, I'll never forget, her name was Amanda and she played basketball for UT. And she came from, I think, Dallas. And she came to me one day and she was just really upset. And she was like, "Jennifer, you know, I was always friends with the White people in High School because my parents were kind of like the more 'White Black' kind of people." And she's like, "And here, like when we go to the cafeteria, like I feel like I need to sit with the Black people, because it's very segregated, like that"…And she said, "Like I feel like I need to do that, and I don't know what to do." (CI1, F202, p. 3)

Jennifer went on to explain that at the time she really did not feel qualified to help students like Amanda because she was White and did not have the same experiences or understand what is was like to be faced with racial decisions about identity. However, she did walk away from this experience realizing that her students of color had very different experiences and decisions to make because of their race. Jennifer shared another example that helped her recognize cultural differences.

I had a Pilipino student named Yvonne and she had four of five kids in her family living at home. This was when I was just having all of these people come talking to me about racial identity and not knowing what to say back. And she came in

and said, "My parents are buying a new house, and I want to start sending home money for the mortgage. Can you help me get a job in the cafeteria?"…I was like, "You're 18!" You know? And I think I wanted to share that story, because it helped shape for me understanding a different value system…Yvonne saw that her parents had worked hard enough just bringing them here to this Country, and now she was willing to work a minimum wage job to send home money for this. They were going to buy an $8000, tiny little house and she was going to send home money. And I mean for me, it was just like, "Wow!" I couldn't believe the cultural differences. I just wanted my parents to send ME money. (CI1, F202, p. 6)

Jennifer has also been in an inter-racial relationship for over seven years. She explained that being in a relationship with Nizar who is Pakistani and Muslim has taught her a lot about her own identity.

Jennifer: So, we've been dating for a long time now. And being in a close relationship with somebody who is not White, definitely changes the way you see yourself, that is [it has] for me. And when I told my parents about us, my mom was like, "Okay. I thought they had arranged marriages?" is what she

said. [Laughs] I was like, "Uh, because he's Muslim?" And I'm like, "Okay." But, there's been a series of remarks, you know, made just out of ignorance that kind of… One of them was, "Don't you want your children to be blonde?" I was just like, "Mom! Like that is just such a narrow definition of beauty. You know?" But, it's been interesting. So we've been dating a long time and I think that my identity has changed because of that. (CI1, F202, p. 4)

As a result of her relationship with Nizar she has noticed that people of color treat her differently because she of her inter-racial relationship.

And it's interesting because when some of these kids [of color] would come and talk to me they would be like, "You know you look like a White sorority girl but we've seen Nizar and we know that you probably understand." And the first time someone said that, I was like, "Uh, understand what?" Like, "What do you think, like what does that mean about me?" You know? Because to me it was just, he's just this guy that I was in love with and I liked and, you know? But they thought that it meant somehow that I understood where they were coming

from. It just says so much to be in a, I guess, mixed race relationship, to people that are of minority background.

Renee shared that just after high school she began working at Wal-Mart where she met Sara who was biracial (African American and White). Sara taught her a lot about difference and dispelled a lot of negative stereotypes about race and class.

Renee: like Sara grew up on welfare, I mean, didn't even have a phone. They couldn't afford a phone and they lived out in a rural area. Didn't even have a car sometimes. She's a high school teacher [now]. She had scholarship[s] the whole time [during college], 'cause her grades were so good, she's won so many awards. She's one of the smartest people I've ever met. (II, S204, p. 31)

Sara influenced Renee to pursue friends from a variety of backgrounds and have more diverse experiences because through her relationship with Sara she demystified difference and became more comfortable with developing relationships with people who are different.

Renee: But also she helped teach me that other people they're not and cannot dictate what I want for my life as long as I don't let them. And she also helped open my eyes open to meet new friends that gave me experience in cultural difference. She

taught me and my other friends taught me consequently that I should always remain mindful to each person's experience and be humble in understanding their perspective. (CI2, S204)

As a result, Renee expressed the importance of developing relationships with people who are different and have experiences across cultural boundaries in order to learn more about yourself and others.

Across Ability lines

I shared how my relationship with my deaf brother has influenced how I view disability.

My brother has had a huge impact on my life because seeing him persevere and be misunderstood constantly, it has made me really question what does it mean to have a disability? And whose right is it to judge whether or not someone is able? And whose right is it to say you can't have access to this because you don't have the cognitive ability? Or you don't have this or that versus how can I make you, how can I accommodate to help you be a part of society? How can I make life more accommodating for you? My brother once said, "I have worked my whole life learning how to accommodate you [hearing people], learning how to talk, and how to read lips, so

that it would be easier for you, but what have you done for me? How have you made my life easier? I still can't hear, I will never hear."

And that really stayed with me in learning about the culture of disability and to me I almost feel like every single kind of sub-culture of disability be it learning disability, mental disabilities, mental illness, deafness, hard of hearing, visual impairment, all those it makes me really wonder are. Do all of these different disabilities have their own sub-culture? Because I know that in particular with vision and deafness and hard of hearing there is this movement in looking at the key people who have been visually impaired or who have deafness that have influenced history as well as looking at how their schooling process evolved. And so to me it makes me really question like what is somebody with a mental disability? I wonder do they really [have a disability]? You know, they exist within a different reality but does that necessarily mean we should be labeling them as not being "able?" So those are things I grapple with all the time. (CI1, S200, p. 2)

As a result of my relationship with my brother and his constant struggle to succeed in a culture that viewed him as "disabled; I have begun to re-think how we construct disability. Similarly, Amy began to reflect on her treatment of people with disabilities as a result of her relationship with Marcy.

> *Amy: And I guess it just all of the literature that I've read, it kind of just put it into play on, you know and then we were talking the other day. She's like, yea, you have no idea, you know, she's like I'm so good at relating to people, 'cause Amy you don't know what I've experienced, you know…and it was stuff I should have known, but I think too, I think going back to school's made me, it makes me think about things more, too, or how I talk or what I say, or am I kind of patronizing them, or kind belittling, you know people, I don't care, even if they have a 20 IQ, you know, are you still treating them how they should be treated? (CI1, F205)*

With Amy and I because we learned first hand about how people with disabilities are treated differently, we became more aware and began to re-think the construction of disability, which perpetuates a deficit orientation rather than viewing such individuals as people first.

Aspects of the Course that Influenced Our Changed Perspective about Difference

In this section, I present data related to aspects of CCIMSE that participants reported as facilitating a shift in their thinking. During the second collaborative inquiry I presented a list of aspects that were brought up during the individual interviews. We reviewed them and participants had an opportunity to agree or disagree and then expand on these aspects or add new ideas, as they felt necessary. Initial themes included safe environment - not being judged, recurring themes, interactive discussion, dialogic reflection – having to think about it, exposure to different perspectives, frameworks for understanding difference, and the destination is a journey not a stagnant place of arrival. As I read and re-read transcripts and [re]listened to video of the inquiries I developed three major themes from participants words: "meeting people where they are at," "having to think about it," and "another way of looking."

"MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT"

> *Caroline: Yeah that's something that she was really good at too, I think meeting people where they were at because we were all at completely different points [in our understanding of difference].*
>
> *Jennifer: I think she really, really sees it as a journey so you can't hurry someone through a journey.*

Renee: That's what she said in my journal.

In my interview with Amy we discussed this same characteristic of Dr. Morales' ability to meet people where they are at in the process of understanding difference. In reading the literature on diversity training and how to facilitate a group Amy said:

> *It [the literature] talks about like a facilitator and stuff, like being not emotional or remaining non-biased and stuff, you know. I'm like well that's Dr. Morales because you never, you know she never really put her opinion, I mean she would teach you and stuff, but then openly listen to everybody and validate, kind of, what they said…*
>
> *Barbara: I am amazed at how…she is so validating, and she really meets people where they're at. And that is a skill, to be able to meet somebody, right where they're at and not place judgment, but just listen and they you may or may not agree with it but her philosophy of shifting peoples ideas, is not by heading, like facing their beliefs head on, but it's more through modeling and exposure. (II, F205, p. 33)*

Kimberly gave an example of how Dr. Morales met her where she was at in responding to one her journals where she was processing through how race impacted her teaching.

> *Kimberly: I tried to, kind of, smooth over it and Dr. Morales just did a really good job of, again, like we were talking about earlier, meeting me where I was and not be like, "Oh yea, I can't believe you did that." [Laughs] You know? Or like, "Kim, that should have been obvious, why did you not…" instead it was just like…*
>
> *Barbara: That we're human.*
>
> *Kimberly: Right. Exactly. You know? I'm like, that's a natural thing to do. And don't worry about it and…*
>
> *Barbara: Now you know for next time.*
>
> *Kimberly: Exactly, exactly. I think in all of my journals, I put the phrase; well, hindsight's always 20/20, you know. (II, F206, p. 40)*

Renee: She just is very non-judgmental of everything, um and she really, she made me feel good about the ideas that I had. (II, F204, p. 36)

Kimberly: I can remember going through my journals thinking why didn't Dr. Morales just say, "you're an idiot Kimberly!" [Laughing] Like "why in the world would you think that?" or "Why would you do that?" You know?

"HAVING TO THINK ABOUT IT"

Renee: The only value that she placed on us, I think, was for us all to be mindful, of each other and each other's opinions, um, thoughts, ideas, or moral thinking. Other teachers [professors at the university] are not open to that. They don't [encourage open dialogue], [they expect you to] keep your opinions to yourself or they don't want to talk about it 'cause they don't want to open up a can of worms. (II, F204, p. 32)

During her interview Amy talked about how the class challenged her identity and in doing so helped her re-think how she viewed others.

Amy: "cause I think when I first entered the class, it made me really challenge myself in looking at who I am, like kind of

made me insecure with myself. Or just made me go through, you know question who I was, or even like my beliefs. (II, F205, p. 31)

Amy agreed that she was uncomfortable and said that the course brought to the forefront the need to get outside of yourself and de-center in order to re-center your understanding.

It just made you feel like you were just so self-absorbed because you didn't have to deal with other people's feelings or emotions for so long but then having to actually deal with it. That you did neglect that [other's perspectives/emotions] (CI 2, F205)

Amy relied on her good friend Miranda for emotional support while she was engaged in the course. Miranda used to be a social worker and now works as a nurse so she has "really good listening skills."

Amy: 'cause sometimes I come home from that class and just cry and so I call her [Miranda] on the way home, but she would always check up on me on those nights and kind of see, kind of what I did, or how I felt or, because she was really interested in it also.

Barbara: So how would you characterize that class?

Amy: I liked it, I think it, it challenge, I think it challenged me, it made me step outside of my boundaries a lot, because, I don't really know why, but I think sometimes I hated going to the class, but the thing is sometimes I loved it. It was a love/hate kind of thing. (II, F205, p.32)

Kimberly talked about her lack of awareness in reviewing her journals, "*How could I have been so blind to not think about certain things before?" (CI2, F206).* Looking back at the opportunity to journal during class, she expressed that the journals helped her to see how she had grown in her perspective from things that had occurred when she taught (prior to entering the class). In her journals she reflected on her experiences as a teacher and thought, how could she have been so blind? Kimberly said, "Thinking about how you come about a solution or is it a problem that even needs a solution?" In her individual interview, Amy expressed a similar sentiment.

Amy: And I think at the end, you know I think Dr. Morales was talking about, you know being confident, yea, you have to be confident in your beliefs in order…these are basic concepts that you learn, but being confident in your beliefs kind of, like where you come to a point where you're confident with yourself, you know and then you are able to accept…everybody else (II, F205, p. 31)

It's about being grounded in yourself and not necessarily proving to others how they need to see things but that you can be solid in your own beliefs while hearing what others believe whether or not you agree.

> *Amy: And you, you don't necessarily have to get into a verbal argument or whatever, but being, part of being multicultural [having a multicultural perspective] is kind of, you know listening to their [other's] point of view, but then also holding your own beliefs. (II, F205, p. 31)*

It opened up a dialogue for looking at others' perspectives or experiences.

Learning from others experiences

Participants learned from listening to the experiences of their classmates as well as from the stories Dr. Morales shared about her own life.

> *Jennifer: Yeah, when she talked, this is totally about Dr. Morales, when she talked about her husband and how he's catholic and how their kids are doing counseling [laughing]. I was like that's probably what will happen if Nizar and I get married! And I just, I think that's why I latched on to her. And I was like, oh you have this is the experience that could happen in my life. And I think that her, I think it was more about her sharing her personal you know the way that students can attach and make meaning of what a professor is saying when*

they share personal experiences. But for me when she said that about how her daughter has to go to counseling now. And she feels like part of it is her working through the differences in her parents' lives. And so, that was just a moment in class for me and I was like, "oh gosh!" But there were tons; I probably had an "ah-hah" moment every time we met. (II. S202, p. 24)

Renee shared that she learned a lot from hearing other students in class discuss their experiences.

Renee: And the people, the people, like Cheri. I'm really good friends with her now, um, I mean she was in Belize, she's from Jamaica. She's had a whole other set of life experiences, just that have added, added to my learning…Cheri is just [pause] just a deep thinker and every sentence that comes out of her mouth, that she seems like a philosopher. (II, F204, p.33-34)

Because Renee felt intimidated to share her experiences in class hearing students' in class who had had similar experiences as her was also helpful.

Renee: Some girl [in class] started talking about growing up, in a really, like, hillbilly atmosphere. I was like, "Oh! That's me." (II, F205, p. 40)

Renee mentioned that the movie clips Dr. Morales showed to demonstrate cultural values were beneficial because it held her "attention" and "everybody watches movies" so it was a practical exercise that connected with real-life experiences.

Dialogic Reflection Journals

We agreed that participating in dialogic reflection journals helped us to think more critically and recognize other's perspectives. When I asked the group if this helped in their journey Caroline responded:

> *Caroline: It felt like therapy!*
>
> *[Nods around the room in agreement and laughter]*
>
> *Amy: It was!*
>
> *Barbara: Why was it like therapy?*
>
> *Caroline: Because when I came into the class I was so completely negative…but like more and more it was just her way of just explaining different ways to look at things [in my journals]. I don't know it just kind of made me realize like oh, "Stop this whole poor me attitude!" You know and start to think about it in a different way…and alternative ways of looking at what happened. And alternative ways of even. It*

sounds so weird but I can sometimes be so very tactless and it just made me realize that even like my tone of voice I am going to say something in is going to have an effect on [how others perceive me] and I just never really thought about that…I don't know this class just made me think about everything like the way you talk, the words you use, even make, have a huge effect. It's just more of being mindful of other people. (CI 2, S201)

During her individual interview Kimberly explained that the reflection journals were helpful because she was able to re-think about her experiences teaching in the Mississippi Delta.

Kimberly: I think reflection is such a powerful tool…And part of that is just the act writing them down. You know? I think it's a very powerful tool, you realize a lot when you write, instead of when you just think about it in your head while your driving. You know? I had to sit down and really put my thoughts out on paper.

Barbara: And how did you respond to the feedback?

Kimberly: It was nice because in a lot of them I think I expressed some doubts or some concerns that I had had

looking back on what I had done as a teacher and kind of opened my eyes to some things and you're like, "Oh." You know, here I was thinking that I made race a non-issue instead of addressing it, you know, instead of really working on it. (II, F206, p. 39-40)

Jennifer explained that reflecting in her journal helped her apply the concepts she was learning in class.

Jennifer: I think the journals were really helpful. I think that um, especially for me because I don't really apply things until I've talked about them or written about them. When I'm reading them, I'm just kind of like, "uh, huh, uh, huh." And I'll kind of highlight you know like everyone does but when I go back to try to apply them to my life and write it out then that's when I really synthesize or talk about it. And I think talking about it in class was always helpful. (II, S202, p. 26)

For Jennifer it was more than just writing down her ideas but the dialogic nature helped her gain further insight.

Jennifer: I mean cuz that's always the thing about journaling for me, is I don't just always feel that much better having written it down because I'm kind of like, "yeah, that's how I

felt inside my head already." You know, it's when someone reads it and says, validates how I was feeling, first of all and then says maybe you should try this. Then that, then I feel better. (II, S202, p. 26)

Renee also talked about how Dr. Morales' comments gave her positive reinforcement, which encouraged her to continue to grow.

Renee: But I think it was when I got the third or fourth paper back. And, just what she would write, I felt like I was getting it, or starting to get it. 'Cause if I don't feel like I'm getting it, and I don't have any kind of encouragement, then I start feeling real bad, and I get depressed and I don't focus as much and I feel like, "Oh God! It's never going to be good enough." And then I'd get nervous about talking to the teacher and then I won't go talk to the teacher and then I'll drop the class…She encouraged me to talk more in class too. Um, but she just encouraged [all] us [not necessarily me in particular]. (II, F205, p. 40)

Through the dialogic journals we discussed our ability to develop the concept of mindfulness in our own behavior due to the way Dr. Morales

responded to us in the journals. During the second collaborative inquiry, I asked the group if they felt this way and Renee responded:

> *Renee: In one of my papers she wrote. I was talking about how my husband is very. Well, even though I will educate him about what I am learning in class he's just like "Oh whatever, that's just her opinion. That's not how it is." No matter what he says I can't change him I have to meet him where he is at. That's what she kept saying. You can't impose your beliefs or your, um even though you might be right [laughter], you can't impose and you have to meet him where he is at to help cultivate that [new perspective].*

Jennifer discussed how she used reflective journaling as part of her practicum, the summer after CCIMSE, which reinforces the finding that reflective journaling is an effective pedagogical practice.

> *Jennifer: Well, this summer I had a reflection journal. It was part of the requirement of our practicum. And um, yeah if we didn't do anything else in that practicum I think that keeping that journal was really helpful that was the most helpful out of everything. Because she wanted us to connect to the readings in class, our discussions in class, and our experiences with our students. And I think those three things are important because I*

don't think just re-hashing what went well and what didn't go well in your day is really all that productive. But making a connection between something you've learned and then also thinking like how this could be better using that was good. (II, F202)

"ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING"

The class gave us "frameworks for understanding phenomena we had experienced" and helped us view previous experiences in a new way.

Caroline: And that class I guess kind of showed me like another way of looking at [sigh] what I went through and the way I was treated. And so, looking at it from, instead of you know the defensive like me, poor me! I was looking at it from their side too and their experiences that they probably had their whole lives. And that's you know of course shaped who they are and how they reacted to me. And so once I kind of saw that it kind of made things a whole lot better. You know, just to the point where I can think about going back to teaching you know this year. So…(II, S201, p. 8)

For example Caroline shared that through the course she was able to recognize alternative explanations for the way she was treated at Booker.

Caroline: when I was in this class you know and I really started looking at…[pause]…you know how their experiences and how their lives shaped who they are and the way they act and you know just passed happenings in their lives and that's why, you know, maybe, maybe that's why they view me this way. Maybe you know, maybe they've had previous experiences that were not pleasant with someone that was Caucasian or whatever you know. (II, S201, p. 11)

Jennifer shared that the readings and frameworks from class helped her recognize and think about phenomena she had experienced talked. For example, in her final journal Jennifer commented on the usefulness of reading Tatum's work about Racial Identity Theory. When I asked Jennifer if it was that specific reading that changed her perspective she replied:

Jennifer: Like, that's how I feel about a lot of what we read and talked about is that I had experiences and thoughts to plug in for almost everything that she [Dr. Morales], all the terms that she gave us. And all the "ah-hah" moments were like even in reading her [Tatum's] article, was me saying, "oh this is why." You know, yeah I've noticed that or yes I am coming through that process [within my white racial identity]. This is where I am - those kinds of things. (II, S202, p. 25)

Caroline shared how one of the activities, a Cross-Cultural Dialogue in which students were required to interview someone from a different cultural background, helped her learn about other's perspectives.

> *Caroline: I guess it's just kind of like a combination of most of our assignments and stuff you know. Like interviewing the, a person from a different culture it just like all of those things I just kind of started [pause] thinking about. I guess like you know, how they're just from a very different place than from where I am from. And you know they have children with disabilities and I don't. And their life experiences are way different from mine. And um you know I've lived like a pretty pampered life [laughing]. (II, S201, p. 16)*

Being able to name phenomena

Jennifer commented that the dimensions of cultural variability helped her to understand phenomena that she had already experienced.

> *Jennifer: Equipping me with frameworks for understanding patterns that I had seen throughout my life. Just as an example like individualism and collectivism but there were other frameworks that I learned that we would apply to different scenarios. (CI 2, S202)*

So it was not that the ideas were necessarily new, but rather the terminology helped her gain an understanding of the deeper meaning of phenomena she had experienced.

> *Jennifer: Being able to name phenomena that are going on. Knowing where to look for more information. I think that specifically, like I have hung on to the articles about choosing literacy materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. The checklist that we got about gender and um, I can't remember what it's called but making sure that what you're teaching, the materials you're teaching with are, are appropriate in terms of gender, and race, and I think. I save them and like I have them at school with me cuz I want to make sure that I reference them. Um, so I think that and knowing the names of like the experts in the field. I think that I will go back and if I have a question about something that is going on. You know I have my articles and I kind of know where people fit and different areas of the field and I'll reference them. (II, S202, p. 22)*

For example, she was able to think more deeply about the differences in her relationship with Nizar.

Jennifer: I think in the class with Dr. Morales gave me a lot of names for things that I have seen in our relationship and I am able to talk about them a lot more with him now. Because I can totally explain you know? And also I understand, I don't take things as personally as I did. Um, cuz before I just kind of felt like, you don't know who I am, but I'm nice like why don't I just don't understand like I love him why, why wouldn't they just get to know me? You know but I, I can understand more from my parent's perspective. It's easier for me to see the values that my parents I think have passed on to me, and name them. And it is just so nice to be able to name things um but that doesn't help. (II, F202, p. 12)

Ongoing journey: It's a process not a goal

Jennifer: It's not being somewhere or a destination but that it's thinking about things as you face them. (CI 2, F202)

Amy discussed how class brought up a lot of different emotions for her and often time the class felt like therapy.

Amy: sometimes I did dread going to [class], but it wasn't anything bad about it, I think it was just me emotionally, 'cause sometimes, you know like it, it just kind of really serviced a lot

of attention, but I think after it really made me grow as a person. I mean it was kind of like a psychotherapy class, kind of, even I think dealing with things in my childhood, really helped. (II, F205, p. 33)

During the second collaborative inquiry we repeatedly talked about the process of developing a critical consciousness about difference as an ongoing journey. That it is not a place of arrival, but we are continuing to work toward understanding and being mindful of differences.

Jennifer: She [Dr. Morales] really just sees it as a journey and so, you can't hurry someone through a journey.

Renee: That's what she said, she wrote that [idea] on my journal.

Barbara: In fact, we [Dr. Morales and I] just did this conference presentation and one of the titles of our slide was "it's a journey not a goal" Like that it's not about you all of the sudden arrive somewhere but that it's about this constant negotiation of understanding. And that we are never arrived we are always just trying to get closer to understanding.

Jennifer: That's funny that you say that…because after her class I had like mindfulness with question marks on it because I kept asking myself like am I mindful now? Am I there yet? [other's saying yes and laughing] And it's taken my like two years for me to really begin to see. Like it's not being somewhere or a destination but that it's thinking about things as you face them. So it's just so interesting that you wrote that because I was like really obsessed with that for a while. [Laughter]

Barbara: Like are you mindful

Jennifer: Yeah like I was wondering like all the time.

Since her individual interview, which occurred the summer after CCIMSE, Jennifer shifted again in her thinking about her family's role in shaping her.

Jennifer: In Dr. Morales class I started questioning all of this (my background) like it is bad to be religious? Like maybe that's wrong? Maybe you're damning other people? [Laugh] I was really concerned about this. And I was concerned about my parents' choice to home school me. Like that was really

such an isolating experience. And I was kind of angry like right after the class.

B: I remember that and you are at such a different space now

Jennifer: Absolutely that's why this is a journey!

As a result of time and being able to continue to digest and think about the material and process stared in CCIMSE, Jennifer was able to [re] think about the role her family had in her life.

> *Jennifer: The gifts that I got from this [her upbringing] about empathy that I didn't see then [during and immediately after class] at all. Um it takes some perspective and I guess some time. But I feel like I am moving more towards the mindfulness state if you will. (CI2, F202)*

Amy expressed that the emotional response she experienced to the course, required her time to process.

> *Amy: I think the whole class, like I think, I think it made me really emotional and I don't think until like the very end, like it just kind of set in. (II, F205, p. 29)*

We talked about how we are continuing to evolve even after the course, which reinforced the idea that the process of developing a critical consciousness

about difference is a journey. We also agreed that it is not a journey in which we only continue to develop critical understandings but that we waver back and for the through the journey.

> *Kimberly: And that's kind of why it's a journey like and there are probably times when we will go through negative experiences again and we won't be exactly where we are now. You like you kind of go back and forth.*

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

There are many avenues to dismantling educators' deficit perspectives of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse (CLED) students. That is, there are many pieces to be addressed to capture the complex etiology of deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997). Developing a critical consciousness about CLED students who are different from White or mainstream-oriented teachers involves a complex interaction among cultural, socio-cultural, psychocultural and environmental dimensions of the individual such as emotional well-being, intellectual reasoning, context, and history (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Our socialization shapes what we believe about difference and as we encounter new knowledge our perspective or "life-world" can either be reinforced or disrupted; the latter can spur a shift in thinking toward developing a newfound understanding (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 1998). Within the multicultural special education literature, it has been recognized that educators' inability to understand the complex relationship among students' racial and political identities and how this affects student behavior and outcomes is, in large part, because "white teachers do not often experience a 'racialized identity' (though, indeed they have one) nor have many had the opportunity to think about what it might be like to be a person of color in a racist society" (Pugach & Seidl, 1998, p. 325).

The multicultural literature suggests the need for white teachers to self-actualize and have a solid understanding of who they are with strong roots in their identity in order to have the ability to validate *others'* experiences (Delpit, 1995;

hooks, 1994; Nieto, 1996). However, multicultural pedagogy in teacher preparation programs has mostly been focused on nonwhites (Haymes, 1995). More specifically, it has centered on students of color and how teachers can "accommodate" them, rather than understanding the role of the teacher's identity in understanding difference. Ignoring White identity serves to naturalize whiteness (Haymes, 1995) rather than viewing it through a critical lens. As long as teacher preparation programs do not allow opportunities for white educators to unpack their own identity, dialogue with perspectives that counter or differ from their own experiences, and reflect on how their beliefs interact with classroom practice, equitable education will remain an ideal.

This study served to explore the ways in which White women, including me, constructed and re-constructed our understanding of difference in education as we worked toward developing a critical consciousness about difference in education. We collaboratively investigated aspects of our life experiences and engagement in a multicultural-centered, special education graduate course, Cross-Cultural Interactions in Multicultural Special Education (CCIMSE) that influenced a shift in our thinking. Two major themes emerged from this investigation: (a) Whiteness served to complicate our understanding of difference in education, and (b) mindfulness served to facilitate a growth in our thinking as a result of our engagement in the course. In this chapter, I discuss these themes in terms of the need to attend to Whiteness in special education teacher preparation and the role of mindfulness as an important component of pedagogy and practice

in facilitating consciousness-raising. Limitations and implications for future work are also discussed.

Attending to Whiteness in Special Education

Researchers in whiteness studies have noted that often whites view race as an ascription or trait of "others" and not belonging to those in the dominant group (Castagna & Dei, 2000). It is important, therefore, to recognize that often Whites do not experience themselves as racialized beings, which results in their whiteness being viewed as normal (Pugach & Seidl, 1998). For example, in this study, being raised in the dominant racial and socioeconomic class afforded some participants the privilege of turning a "blind-eye" to inequities across race, class, and ability lines as they were growing up. Rather, their understanding of difference was viewed as a "non-issue" because it did not negatively affect their ability to achieve and participate in society. Difference was viewed as something that simply did not affect their daily lives. These participants described their lives as "sheltered." As we unpacked our understanding of difference and how our life experiences and engagement in CCIMSE created moments for developing a critical consciousness about difference in education we discovered that the following experiences assisted us: (a) developing relationships with people who are different, (b) experiencing being an outsider, (c) having opportunities to hear about those who have been "othered" so as to recognize differential treatment, and (d) having opportunities to reflect on our own identities and experiences that shaped how we understand difference. This suggests that teacher preparation programs in general and special education need to provide opportunities for pre-

service and in-service teachers to engage in similar experiences, especially for those who have had limited experience or understanding of being racialized.

Teacher preparation programs in special education must provide space for dialoguing about Whiteness and racial identity as a contributing factor to how knowledge is constructed, privileged and reified in education in order to re-construct toward equitable and responsive teaching practices that meet the needs of CLED learners in special and general education (Marx & Pennington, 2003). Teacher educators who embark on this journey of understanding difference in education must recognize that this is a process, not a destination, which varies for each individual. How pre-service and in-service teachers respond to material in class is a reflection of several factors, including their life experience, prior coursework, awareness of their multiple identities (e.g. race, class, gender, ability, etc) and their emotional wellbeing. As McCarthy notes:

> You cannot understand race by studying race alone. You cannot understand the social, cultural, or political behavior of any group by looking at their putative racial location to the exclusion of a more complex examination of their social biographies and the complex and constantly changing social context of the modern world in which we live. We have to look at the varied and variable patterns in which different social groups are historically incorporated into the institutional life of systems and structures such as those associated with education. (p. 132)

The findings of this study suggest that teacher educators need to meet pre-service and in-service teachers where they are in the process, through recognizing what is influencing their perspectives, asking questions to unpack their understanding, modeling and exposing them to multiple perspectives that serve to interrupt and re-construct their current notion of difference toward a progressively more critical understanding, and allowing opportunities to reflect and dialogue about their newfound perspectives. One way that teacher educators can provide opportunities for such reflection is through dialogic journaling (Britzman, 1991). Dialogic journaling is the process in which students reflect in a journal and the instructor responds to their journaling. Such a process provides educators, in particular White teachers who have had minimal prior exposure to diverse groups, the opportunity to explore and negotiate their identity and their understanding of difference in confidence with the instructor.

Equally important for teacher educators is not only to teach the concept of mindfulness as part of course content, but to embody it as pedagogy so that educators can learn how to become mindful in their own practice. Mindfulness as pedagogy requires teacher educators to create new categories and expand students' current understanding of difference, to be open to new information from students and provide frameworks to help them to remain open, and be aware of more than one perspective by allowing for interruptions within our understanding of difference. As Asher (2003) asserts,

> Educational discourses and practices need to engage differences that students and colleagues bring to the classroom; attend to their particular

> stories; recognize that identities and cultures are "fluid" and "hybrid" rather than static/fixed; recognize that this is true not only of "others" but also of the "self"; and engage in a self-reflexive process that allows the multiple, evolving identities, cultures, and representations to emerge as a critical aspect of the educational process. (p. 2)

If our goal is to provide coursework that develops a critical consciousness about difference, then teacher educators in general and special education need to be well-versed in the nuances of the transformative process as well as the ways in which whiteness, deficit thinking, and oppression operate within the system of education. As such, teacher educators need to experience the same preparation that is typically recommended for in-service and pre-service teachers to develop a critical consciousness about difference in education.

COMPLICATING WHITENESS: MOMENTS OF POSSIBILITY & HOPE

In the beginning narrative that opens my dissertation, I recount my experience of being involved in a school-wide diversity training, which served as the impetus for my research. During this experience the majority of teachers shut down and became resistant to the challenging and often difficult conversations presented by the trainers that situated the failure of diverse learners within a broader system of deficit oriented education that privileges whiteness and dominant perspectives of education at the expense of diverse students. Even as a critical educator, I was seduced by my privilege as a White woman as I engaged in resistance conversations with fellow teachers who turned the ownership of

deficit thinking back onto the approach of the trainers. And yet, because I was simultaneously receiving my Master's in bilingual special education, I was able to debrief with my professors who helped me consider deeper insights, and because of my upbringing I was able to see the parody in these conversations. I re-engaged in the training to examine the system that privileges some at the expense of others. I wondered what it was about me that enabled me to bounce back and not completely shut down. Why did I seek the advice of my professors rather than turn a "blind-eye" to the messages of the training?

As I reflect back on this experience, I am reminded of the powerful effects of whiteness; i.e., that the teachers' resistance to the training could have been, in part, due to their reification of whiteness and masking or protection of privilege (Hytten & Warren, 2003). As a result, many teachers shut down and discontinued productive participation in the training by resisting critical conversations that examined the institutional and personal assumptions and practices that privileges some while undermining the ability of others (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). This experience motivated me to want to examine further the ways in which we develop critical understandings of difference in education with White teachers, without shutting down our motivation to engage in such conversations. How do we keep White pre-service and in-service teachers engaged in critically examining privilege, whiteness, and systems of power in education that pervade not only the policy, practice, and climate of our schools but our personal understandings of difference in education?

The current whiteness literature on teacher education offers a lens for recognizing the role whiteness plays in continued deficit thinking about difference in education. Hytten and Warren (2003) re-count and describe how students (both White and from diverse backgrounds) reify or protect whiteness as they engage in making meaning of whiteness and cultural theory readings. Their work clearly demonstrates the embedded nature and power of Whiteness. While I find this type of analysis meaningful, equally important is a need to recognize the deeper underlying reasons why students make meaning of Whiteness in the ways they do, and to recognize moments of possibility and hope (Hytten & Warren, 2003). For instance, in my study we talked about how "being surrounded by Whiteness" and "sheltered experiences with difference" impeded our ability to recognize white privilege; as a result, our whiteness was viewed as normal because our experiences reinforced white dominance. As a result of our newfound understandings of White identity gained from CCIMSE, coupled with readings I had done as the primary researcher, we were able to recognize the complexity of deficit thinking, whiteness, and white privilege by going back and explicitly exploring the moments that disabled our understandings of difference in more productive ways; i.e., we searched for ways to confront our whiteness by exploring our life experiences that contributed to our misunderstandings that reified or protected our privilege.

An important point to consider is that much of the literature on teachers' understanding of difference in education presents findings from studies that have conducted research *about* rather than *with* participants; the teacher participants'

voices are notably absent in our understanding of how they are making meaning of the data. Brandon (2003) warns that teacher educators in multicultural education courses "can manifest the very notions of deficit thinking in the practice" with white teacher educators by positioning themselves as the "other" (e.g., the whole field of multicultural education), and as "institutionalized officials of multicultural education…[who] speak on behalf of the whole group" (p. 39). As Michelle Fine (1994) suggests,

> Self & Other are knottily entangled. This relationship as wired between researcher and informant is typically obscured in social science texts, protecting privilege, securing distance and laminating the contradictions. (p. 72)

In following the principles of emancipatory learning, it is equally important to involve participants in this process; otherwise, as researchers we risk positioning ourselves as Outsider/Other. The use of collaborative inquiry as my research design was intended to overcome this limitation, in that I shared my own struggles alongside my participants and provided opportunities for them to develop and comment on my story as well as the collection of stories. As joint participants in this study, we were also actively engaged in recognizing how our experiences served to protect whiteness and privilege. For example, Jennifer discussed how her parents exposed her to difference through volunteer activities that reified the notion of privilege and status that her White identity brought her in the company of "others": it was acceptable and even desirable to help those who are different but not to develop relationships with them.

Equally important is the need for teacher educators to position teachers within the social contexts of their lived experiences and larger society that tend to reify and perpetuate deficit thinking (García & Guerra, 2004). Similarly, McCarthy (2003) suggests the need to view teachers "as complex social actors with their own biographical traces back into the stratified society they are learning to critique" (p. 131). Consequently, it becomes important to recognize that teachers do not exist in a vacuum but rather "mirror" the current practices and expectations of the school culture as well as the perspectives of their everyday lives such as family, friends, colleagues, the media, community, etc. (García & Guerra, 2004). So, when teachers enact disabling discourses, this may in part reflect their attempts to dialogue with themselves about the contradictions between classroom discourse and any deficit understandings that may pervade their home, school, or community contexts. Since we are simultaneously products of our previous experiences and bound by our contemporary daily lives that serve to reify or interrupt what we believe about difference, teacher educators need to provide space and time for examining these contradictions. How then do we provide teachers with coping mechanisms to sort through these competing discourses so that they can resist deficit understandings of difference and build practices that are more equitable? What are the strategies or approaches that we can equip teachers with to help them become resilient as they work for social change so that they do not become re-socialized back into the status quo?

If we are to dismantle deficit thinking and construct what it means to be a critical educator, teacher educators in general and special education need to create

space for reciprocal conversations that position us within the dialogue and illuminate the ways in which we are scaffolding and supporting growth of teachers. For example, Jennifer said that Dr. Morales shared her own struggles with cultural differences within her own family which helped Jennifer recognize how cultural differences played a role in her relationship with her Pakistani boyfriend. Additionally, participants expressed that they did not feel judged for their understandings but that strategies and approaches were used to help them self-reflect on their thinking. Kimberly shared that in one of her reflection journals, Dr. Morales validated her response and encouraged her to learn from the experience for future encounters rather than place judgment by telling Kimberly that her ideas were wrong. We, as critical teacher educators, must seek to understand and recognize how socialization, process, and emotion are interacting to frame or shape White students' understanding of difference in education. As Kimberly alluded to in her journal reflection example, teacher educators need to join the process with their participants by recognizing where teachers are at in their personal journey and providing feedback to support their growth. When students feel judged, this can potentially silence those in the process of transformation. Similarly, in an email correspondence responding to the findings presented in Chapter Five, Caroline wrote:

> *I was reading the section "meeting people where they are at" and noted that the reason I made so much progress or (feel like I did) was because of the openness of the class. Dr. Morales was so accepting and validated our views no matter how*

biased they were. She would suggest other ways of looking at things, but it did not make you feel that what you thought or felt was weird or wrong, so it was easy to write openly and speak openly in that class.

As part of this reciprocity, it appears that in highlighting how our White students reify and protect Whiteness, we need to critically reflect on how our practice is serving to silence or inhibit their abilities to move forward. One way this might occur is through building relationships with our students who reify deficit thinking, to create understandings together which might expose us to another way of understanding their perspectives. But this requires us to recognize our role in this process. How do we create space to examine the ways in which whiteness and privilege get reified as we discuss such topics with our students while simultaneously recognizing and examining our role in enabling or disabling such discourse? For example, with Caroline as she embarked on the journey of developing a critical understanding, there were times that I mirrored Caroline's thinking so that she could hear and reflect more on her thoughts. It was in this spirit that I attempted to join the journey with my participants by activating my own journey of understanding how I perceive difference in relation to my life experiences. I not only exposed critical understandings but also acknowledged ways in which I reified Whiteness as an ideal to be achieved and confessed that my feelings of not fitting in as social class Other still haunt me. Asher notes that:

> Even as hooks calls on white/western feminism to break out of its Eurocentric frame, she also says communities of color must engage in self-reflexive critique…thus we recognize that the work of transforming oppressive social structures is both external and internal. That is, even as those who are at the "margins" critique the exclusionary perspectives of those who are the "center," they also need to examine their own practices. (Asher, 2003, p. 3).

The literature on culturally responsive pedagogy suggests that white teachers examine their own cultural lens, which informs how they teach, as a potential explanation for not meeting the needs of their diverse learners (see Howard, 1999; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001). As critical teacher educators it seems equally important to examine our assumptions about perspective change and how these assumptions influence the instructional decisions we make in supporting the growth of our White teachers. How do we begin with what teachers know, to help them understand their cultural frame without reifying the dominant perspective? If Whiteness does get reified, how do we critically examine our practices to understand what we, as teacher educators, may be doing to perpetuate dominance?

The findings of this study suggest that it is possible, drawing on the tools of scaffolding, funds of knowledge, and mindfulness, to develop a perspective and pedagogy that recognizes the position of our White students who are entrenched in their whiteness and to work toward supporting their [un]learning of whiteness

toward developing a critical consciousness. As Luis Moll (1992) suggested, we must begin with the funds of knowledge of the learner; similarly as teacher educators, we must begin with the funds of knowledge of our White teachers. If they have not had opportunities to engage in a critical discussion of their whiteness or do not realize their whiteness to begin with, then we, as teacher educators, need to meet them where they are at in the journey toward developing a critical consciousness. A major finding in my study was that participants reported being able to make shifts in their thinking because Dr. Morales met participants where they were at in the journey. Rather than labeling their understanding as deficient or reifying whiteness she interrupted their beliefs of Whiteness as normal, and/or their deficit beliefs by exposing them to multiple perspectives and asking questions to help them unpack their understanding. Few authors link their reports of deficit thinking with the pedagogy or content of their courses. This potentially limits our ability to be informed as teacher educators engaged in similar activities. As such, continued explorations of the strategies and approaches that facilitate discussion around whiteness and privilege are needed in order to learn ways to respond and dialogue with teachers about their understandings. Marx & Pennington (2003) found that supportive, trust creating dialogue with their White students promoted them to reflect on their whiteness and privilege. Similarly, in my study we discussed that feeling safe and validated for our experiences helped us to continue to reflect.

Because the collaborative inquiry methodology enabled us to dig deeper with each other about how we came to know difference, it was the talk around our

misunderstandings and our experiences that enabled us to re-frame and re-interpret whiteness, privilege, and deficit thinking. Transformative learning theory suggests that "it is the learner's experience that is the starting point and the subject matter for transformative learning" (Taylor, 1998, p. 8). With this in mind, it is important to offer space for teachers or the "adult learner" to engage in reflecting on their own experiences of oppression as a way of connecting and trying to understand oppression of racial "others." However, as Hytten & Warren (2003) state:

> Making connections can provide a powerful way of beginning to more fully understand the experiences of others. Yet, there is also a danger in this discourse, and this is in the relativizing of all differences and putting them on some sort of equal footing…[which can] serve to shift the focus away from the incident to the pain of the person making the connection, while many times trivializing racism in the process (p. 71).

As I reflect further, I wonder how do we determine this fine line of detracting from the role racism plays in our lives as we share our personal experiences of oppression or discrimination? For example, both Renee and I shared the ways in which we experienced discrimination as a result of our social class and felt that we did not have full access to our White identity. And while it is important to recognize that Whiteness is not a static, rigid characteristic for all whites, Renee and I also benefit from being white. We saw our experiences as helping us to recognize and validate the unequal treatment of those who are

different across race, class, ability, culture, and gender lines. Because we had experienced unequal treatment we were able to recognize its existence. However, we simultaneously recognized that we saw Whiteness as an ideal that we were striving to attain. Although we can see this privilege in action at the expense of others, we also bought into this ideal and continue to benefit from our whiteness in ways that we continue to explore. Other participants brought out the contexts that limited the ability to recognize privilege such as "being surrounded by Whiteness" and "sheltered experiences with difference" which insulated or protected this privilege; as a result our whiteness was viewed as normal because our experiences reified white dominance. It is important to note that while we had, and continue to have, experiences that interrupt our perception of White as normal by "being an outsider – learning from discomfort," "seeing differential treatment" and "developing influential relationships" with others or those who viewed others as equal, we still struggle with breaking free from our privilege. That is, we recognize the oppressive result of white privilege and thus work toward creating a critical understanding yet continue to benefit from whiteness in ways that we may never realize. What is important to recognize however in this effort to re-construct and re-shape our understanding of privilege is that the combined experiences in our lives, CCIMSE and the collaborative inquiry that have facilitated our growth. And, that while our discussions centered on the factors that facilitated our growth in understanding difference, we equally recognize that this process is untidy and that we are not immune from engaging in disabling discussions of difference in spite of our newfound awareness. However,

we hope that we have gained the tools to recognize when we are engaged in "white talk" and deficit-oriented discourse so that we may shift our thinking further toward re-shaping our beliefs in more equitable ways. As Kimberly suggested:

> *Kimberly: And that's kind of why it's a journey, like, and there are probably times when we will go through negative experiences again and we won't be exactly where we are now. You, like, you kind of go back and forth.*

What we know about perspective change is that it is a process and this process takes time (Taylor, 1998). As such the need to have multiple courses that infuse such pedagogy and allow teachers to dialogue and discuss is critical. However, with the majority of teacher preparation programs in special education at best offering only one course in multicultural perspectives, it is not surprising that the special education teacher education literature continues to report students' misunderstanding of difference as deficit and whiteness as normalized (Pugach & Seidl, 2001); that is, such courses can, at best, initiate the process of cultural and racial self-awareness, but may not be able to do much more, given the limitations of one semester. We collectively believe that teacher preparation programs need offer more than one course to provide space for the continuing process of unfolding identity and deconstructing whiteness, which involves a negotiation with current beliefs toward re-constructing or re-framing difference away from a normalization of whiteness or reifying deficit thinking. The conversations we had as a result of the learning from CCIMSE and our engagement in the collaborative

inquiry are not enough to fully develop our understandings of how to counter deficit thinking and to develop practices that counter hegemony. We all agree that while we are emerging in these understandings and practices, we need more experiences and engagements to continue this growth.

COMPLICATING OUR CONVERSATIONS

In my analysis of the data, I rarely critique how my participants reify whiteness or perpetuate their privilege by requiring a level of comfort within their discussions of understanding difference. Although we identified it as a central theme in helping us recognize how some are privileged at the expense of others, being uncomfortable was not a central emotion in our discussions. We enacted discourse that allowed us to engage in a critical discussion of our understanding of difference in relation to our life experiences with minimal discomfort. Yet there were times in the discussion when discomfort certainly played a role. For example, when I probed Kimberly further on her social circles in high school as a way of confirming how she was insulated by her privilege, she later reflected in her journal that she felt "set up."

> *Kimberly: I initially felt like I had been kind of set up as Barbara had asked directly about my high school clique, how we were the popular ones, and now I was being confronted with people who felt ostracized during high school. And I felt like I hadn't been given the opportunity to acknowledge the discomfort and anxiety I face when I go home because I have*

changed so much and have so little in common with my high school friends. But after being able to reflect on it, that is part of my past, and has shaped at how I look at things. It needs to be addressed. And I hope that people can see past who I was at age 16… and that the same insecurities of not belonging, of not wanting to be different affected us all at that age, and to an extent, still do today.

Rather than probing her to recognize how those who are not in the dominant class face these insecurities on a daily basis, I first responded by accommodating and comforting her fear because I did not want to push her away. I assured her that I did not see her as the 16 year-old young girl unaware of her privilege, despite the fact that I am not sure we ever shed our previous identities but rather negotiate them in new ways: I saw my role as a facilitator to maintain harmony and provide space for discomfort to encourage continued discussion. It has been suggested that if our anxiety is too high or we feel too uncomfortable this can hinder our ability to move forward (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Yet from a critical Whiteness perspective, comfort can play a role in reifying or protecting Whiteness (Hytten & Warren, 2003; Thompson, 2003). As we engage in these challenging discussions that pertain to our lived realities and reveal the contradictions between our ideals and our lived reality or the privilege that we so want to deny; I wonder how do we feel the uncomfortable moments while not creating emotional states that prevent us from being able to think critically. In

other words how do we manage the discomfort around our contradictions or privilege so that we can move through these moments with a heightened understanding rather than shut down and become defensive? It seems that we need to develop mechanisms to develop a balance between the comfort necessary to remain objective and clear while allowing the discomfort to motivate a changed perspective. Because our emotional states can hinder or support us through uncomfortable moments, it is important as a facilitator to recognize the balance of pushing teachers to open their consciousness while providing support so they can move through these highly emotional discussions. As teachers, we need to recognize that even though we may perpetuate privilege, we can look for moments of hope in recognizing how we perpetuate and find ways to interrupt the disabling moments. The goal then seems to be in developing emotional resiliency so that teachers can both acknowledge and feel the discomfort associated with the privilege that works to disadvantage CLED students while maintaining an open perspective to guide us in recognizing ways to interrupt this system and develop educational practices that are more equitable.

Mindfulness as Pedagogy and Practice

As indicated previously, mindfulness was a major theme that emerged from this research, serving as the foundation of the pedagogy and curriculum of the course, as well as the methodology of my study. Mindfulness, as defined by Gudykunst & Kim (1997), is the act of being conscious of our communication or behavior. It is a process of being self-reflective within the act of communication to prevent or circumvent habitual or scripted behavior that can potentially serve to

undermine how we receive, interpret, respond, and are in turn received and interpreted during communication. Gudykunst & Kim (1997) use the analogy of responding on automatic pilot to explain the act of habitual or scripted behavior during communication. As such the goal of mindfulness is to think before responding [on automatic pilot] so that one can recognize alternative explanations and respond in new or informed ways. Key characteristics of mindfulness include creating new categories, being open to new information, and being aware of more than one perspective (Langer 1989, as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

Creating new categories involves the process of exploding broad categories that we use to make predictions about others toward developing more complex categories or distinctions. For example, in this study rather than using the broad term White women; we can subcategorize by class, experience with difference, previous diversity training, relationships with people of color, which brings us to a closer, more personalized view of the women in this study. Being open to new information allows one to recognize the subtle differences across individuals who may have similar characteristics so that we are less likely to make assumptions about others behavior which can lead to responding on automatic pilot. So the focus of communication is on process rather than outcome. For example, in communicating with my participants the goal was to move beyond their White identity to hear the experiences that shaped how they understand difference. Being aware of more than one perspective is the process of probing further to discover another way of viewing the communication act. Again drawing from my research, in the process of investigating our

understanding of difference, we discovered that emotional readiness influenced our ability to think critically about difference (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

Marx and Pennington (2003) found that (a) White students were willing to talk about Whiteness and White racism "when discussions were ensconced in supportive, trusting, dialogical conversations, (b) prolonged dialogue encouraged the researchers and participants to develop "a less politicized, more neutral, and more responsibility centered language with which to talk about race and race issues" (p. 104), (c) the new language and understanding of White racism and Whiteness enabled participants "to see the ways in which their racism affected the children of color with whom they worked" (p. 105), and (d) goodness was associated with nonracist behavior/identities. Another major finding that sheds light on the process of transformation toward a critical consciousness includes that "while White students/participants at first felt debilitated by their recognition of White privilege and White racism, and their relationships to them, through further dialogue they eventually moved on to this more productive use of the power" (Marx & Pennington, 2003, p. 106). Similarly as participants in my study told and re-told their stories, recognition of their white identity and the role whiteness played in their lives became clearer and they were able to gain newfound understandings of how they treated the "other" in order to re-construct difference through a critical lens.

INTERRUPTING RACE-ONLY CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

In using mindfulness as a method for investigating White women's understanding of difference, I was able to contextualize and reach deeper

understandings of our constructions of difference. White women are much more than racialized, gendered beings (Asher, 2003); how we understand difference involves a complex interaction with our life experience, emotional readiness, and opportunities to critically reflect about our experiences. Asher notes:

> It is important for all educators – white and "of color" – to recognize that they [we] live "at the intersections" of race, class, culture, and gender, in dynamic contexts. By recognizing our own multiple identities and roles in relation to our diverse personal and professional contexts, we can begin seeing and drawing on the difference we encounter in our own lives. Perhaps then, the most important consideration that postcolonialism offers to feminist discourses is that hybrid, fluid identities and cultures, and multiple perspectives, are not just about "them," the "other," or "there/elsewhere." They are also about "us, the "self," and "here/at home." (p. 4)

Therefore, in understanding our life experiences, the women in this study initially [in their adolescence] viewed whiteness as an ideal because for those from higher socioeconomic status, White identity was not in conflict with everyday interactions rather it was viewed as "normal" and experiences with difference occurred around sheltered or controlled experiences in which whiteness was positioned as the ideal. For those of us from lower socioeconomic status who did not reap full benefit of our white identity because of class [in our adolescence], whiteness was viewed as an ideal to be achieved.

Taylor (1998) states that "meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialization and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents, and mentors" (p. 6). So it makes sense that in our youth we did not question our understanding of difference or the role whiteness played in shaping our worldview. Taylor goes on to explain that "over time, in conjunction with numerous congruent experiences, these perspectives become more ingrained into our psyche and changing them is less frequent." (p. 6). In this study I examined how perspectives were interrupted and changed. Findings suggest that as we experienced interruptions and contradictions over and over we began to negotiate and question new meanings and had more difficulty holding on to "Truths", opening up to multiple ways of knowing. As we developed a critical consciousness about difference, we experienced interruptions in our previously held understanding of difference through our life experiences and our engagement in CCIMSE, which spurred on a [re] shaping of difference. The interruptions in our life experiences included being uncomfortable, seeing differential treatment, and influential relationships. The pedagogical and curricular practices in CCIMSE that served as interruptions included "meeting people where they are," "having to think about it," and "another way of looking."

By using mindfulness as a pedagogy and curriculum for developing a critical consciousness about difference in teacher preparation programs in general and special education, teacher educators can contextualize and reach deeper understandings of pre-service and in-service teachers' constructions of

difference—not only modeling it, but teaching pre-service and in-service teachers how to become mindful in their practice. The concept of meeting people where they are, and teaching students how to do the same is an essential trait in reducing the power differential of the critical teacher educator with their "unaware" students. Equally important the recognition that white women are much more than racialized beings and that their multiple identities serve to interrupt or reinforce their understanding of difference; i.e., that each person exists within his or her own life world which represents the interactions between the identities they embody and their life experiences which serve to perpetuate or reinforce their life world or interrupt and contradict meaning making (Taylor, 1998). As such, it is important to provide space for Whites to unpack their experiences to bring to the forefront how their ideas about difference have been shaped. For example, Renee did not feel comfortable exploring the role her traumatic brain injury and growing up poor had on her understanding of difference because as she stated:

> *Well, 'cause I've grown up predominately white. What do I have to add, I don't…*

In order to get to a place of recognizing how her White identity has contributed to her understanding of difference it was important to explore the other identities she embodies which helped her break away from Whiteness as the ideal or norm and toward a critical consciousness about difference. Without this, we risk silencing the complex interaction of the identities we embody; if the goal is to work toward pluralism then we need to embark on a pluralistic journey of

examining the multiple identities of Whites. Additionally, we cannot assume universality of experience. As Asher (2003) asserts,

> By encouraging students to share their own stories and engage with the stories of different others, teachers can foster dialog and self-reflection in the classroom. This would allow them to locate the multiple perspectives that emerge at the "center" of the curriculum, rather than as mere "add-ons" at the "margins. (p. 2)

In a recent, follow-up reflection Renee expressed frustration that she was currently experiencing in another multicultural centered course. The instructor of this course placed race at the center of the discourse of difference and did not bring in other aspects of difference that influence our perspectives such as class, gender, ability, cultural competence, etc. As a result, Renee was turned off by the course and although she recognizes the role race and privilege have on how individuals are treated, Renee feels that her ideas are unimportant.

> *Although I initially signed up for the class (I didn't need it for anything) because I wanted to learn more about multicultural "counseling," I am now regretting my decision. This class is nothing like Dr. Morales's class, and I will tell you why (and why I am upset about it). First, we just passed the "halfway-through-the-semester-mark" and NOT ONCE has Dr. Fuentes discussed anything having to do with socioeconomic status, disability, religion, cultural competence, etc. The only two*

things that she has focused on have been race and ethnicity, preferably how white privilege and white oppression have affected America and people's definition of "Americans." Now, I agree with a lot of the material that we are reading, especially Tatum's book, "Why are all the black kids sitting...." *[I'm sure you've read this] HOWEVER, these two fundamentals of multiculturalism (racism and ethnicity in regards to white oppression) have been the ONLY things Dr. Fuentes has focused on (and continues to focus on.) ALL of our readings and journal articles for the semester are tied to these two ideals, and do not incorporate any of the other elements of multiculturalism that Dr. Morales found so important to include in her lectures.*

I am not the only student taking issue with this in class; I am the only one who has not vocally expressed it. *Instead, I have kept my mouth shut, and have tried to get to know Dr. Fuentes on a deeper level, in conversation after class, or regarding assignments…Still, I think this professor thinks I am an upper middle class White girl, and internally, she is projecting negative feelings my way, even though she knows nothing*

about where I came from, my experiences growing up [poor], etc.

I am not trying to negate Dr. Fuentes's experiences nor her feelings with the White race or even say she is wrong in how she thinks… [However] I have almost become disenchanted with the whole multicultural issue, because I feel that my voice is not valid nor wanted, because I am White.

The reason I am so upset over this is because Dr. Morales incorporated every realm of multiculturalism into her classroom lecture, her video's, and teaching materials/tools. Dr. Morales also encouraged me to speak up more. She made me feel that my opinions, thoughts, & ideas were important, and that they mattered, not just in terms of the class, but in life in general. I believe Dr. Morales is aware that her role as a teacher is to start the process by encouraging us to make that change, in order for us to want to take those steps toward personal growth and mindfulness connected to cultural reciprocity. In other words, as our professor, Dr. Morales initiated the "drive" toward change. She was "the gas in our car"; she was the driving force that guided us in our journey to want to learn more about ourselves, our society,

other cultures, and the environment around us. She made each of us feel that we had something to give to the learning process, and I will always admire her and remember her for that.

Dr. Fuentes does not, and has not been good at validating many of the students' feelings regarding materials we are learning. .I am so discouraged in my "journey" now that I don't know what to do. (Email Correspondence, F204, 3/20/05).

What is so unfortunate about this experience is that Renee feels discouraged and confused about her own journey. There is a danger that she, being White, may decide to flee back into her "white-world" and to evade the possibilities of a multicultural, anti-racist, critical perspective. –I think we as critical educators need to take heed that when we use the approaches described by Renee, we risk alienating our students, and we risk loosing them. It may be far more effective to find ways of meeting them where they are at in order to support them through their own journey, and of providing opportunities for them to connect to difference.

Recognizing Boundaries

The results of this study are bound by the perspectives of the six White women who reported a shift in their thinking toward a critical consciousness

about difference in education as a result of taking the course CCIMSE. The findings are not necessarily indicative of other students who were enrolled in the course, especially since there were students from other racial and linguistic backgrounds and not all students reported shifts to the same extent as the participants in this study. Additionally, the findings cannot be generalized to the experiences of other White women outside the realm of this course because the ideas represent an interaction among our life experiences and engagements with CCIMSE. Motivation could have also played a role in the quality of data gathered as all participants expressed an interest in continuing their journey toward understanding difference. With this in mind, other students from the course may have had different responses if they felt a sense of "arrival" in their journey toward understanding difference, did not wish to continue their journey, or felt as though there was no journey to embark on.

Although I have attempted to provide detailed descriptions of my participants, their life experiences as well as the nature of their self-reported transformation in the course, I recognize that the findings may not be transferable to other process-oriented courses or instructors of such courses. Participant responses to this course may have been content- and/or instructor-specific. First, this course specifically addresses cross-cultural interactions in multicultural special education and shifts may have been bound to the readings and discussions centered on special education and multiculturalism, which were course-specific. Second, the shifts that occurred in this course could have been a result of the

instructional style, demographic characteristics, communication style, or level of relationship unique to the professor, with whom participants connected.

Implications and Recommendations

TEACHER PREPARATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Findings from this study suggest that in our early experiences Whiteness is viewed as an ideal. Since, Whiteness continues to pervade our educational practices, creating potential discontinuities with students from CLED backgrounds, teacher education programs in special education must explore effective approaches to teaching about whiteness and its privilege. Rather than reify white dominance by continuing to center on diversity as deficit, we need to illuminate the power of whiteness and the systemic structures that create inequity. Participants in this study report that the following practices assisted in becoming aware of their White identity and to work toward developing a critical consciousness about difference in education: (a) developing relationships with people who are different, (b) experiencing being an outsider, (c) having opportunities to hear about those who have been othered in order to recognize differential treatment, and (d) having opportunities to reflect on our own identity and experiences that shaped how we understand difference, more specifically, having opportunities to dialogue and negotiate our understanding of difference

If we are to facilitate White women's understanding of difference toward a critical consciousness learning about Whiteness and racial identity, enacting mindfulness as pedagogy and content needs to be an integral component of teacher preparation programs in special and general education. As teacher

educators we should begin with white teachers' funds of knowledge by providing initial opportunities to unpack their experiences and upbringing in order to help them to make the connection that situates them within their socialization. One strategy the participants found useful was dialogic journaling, through which they had opportunities for private reflections with the instructor who then responded to their reflections by validating and expanding on their experiences with comments and questions. This more private context in which their thinking could be challenged may have also facilitated their ability and willingness to self-disclose values and/or perceptions, and to take the risk of admitting to their struggle with class-related readings and topics. Because participants were not required to publicly confront their own biases, this process allowed them to take such risks without losing face in the presence of their peers.

Once teacher educators identify what their white teachers know and what they do not know or how they are making meaning of the information in class, they can meet White teachers where they are at in their journey toward understanding difference. The goal is to scaffold white teachers toward recognizing how their identity shapes what they believe about difference and how they enact their identity in the classroom when interacting and instructing students. Another aspect that assisted participants in their raised awareness was being provided with "another way of looking" through reading and learning about frameworks (e. g., racial identity, intercultural communication, value orientations) and being exposed to multiple perspectives on teaching and learning (e. g. culturally responsive teaching, equity pedagogy, cultural reciprocity). Again

participants were provided opportunities to reflect and dialogue on how these works complimented, gave deeper meaning, and/or conflicted with current best practices in special education. Having these opportunities allowed participants to reach deeper meaning of the larger context of education as well as how their socialization influenced their instructional pedagogy and practice.

If teacher educators are to embark on such journeys with their students, they themselves need to be prepared to implement these practices. Graduate programs that prepare teacher educators need to provide coursework that includes the socio-cultural influences of teaching and learning, racial politics in education (to include racial identity theory, power and privilege of whiteness), foundations of transformative learning (to understand the process of perspective change), and principles of mindfulness. Such preparation would allow teacher educators to learn about the complexity of developing a critical consciousness about difference in education and provide them with tools for supporting this journey. Equally, colleges of education will have to develop strategies to promote the acquisition of these skills among the teacher education faculty in general and special education, so that existing programs can be reviewed and modified as needed, to achieve these outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this study was bound by race and gender, it is equally important to investigate the transferability of these results across other groups and settings, to increase our understanding of the interrelationships between life experience and transformative learning for various subgroups of teachers, to identify course

content and pedagogy that are effective across groups, and to identify ways in which pedagogy should be modified to address unique experiences or attributes of specific groups. It is important to examine how other demographic populations such as white men and students of color (male and female) are deriving meaning from such coursework and how their life experiences influence what they believe about difference in education. Similarly, there is a need for research, which can clearly isolate pedagogical principles as well as instructor attributes that are likely to influence participant outcomes. The instructor of the course was Asian and female; her race, ethnicity, gender, and cultural background may have influenced how participants responded to their course experience. With this in mind, this study should be replicated with other instructors using similar approaches; i.e., research is needed which explores the influence of teacher educators' demographic backgrounds including race, class, gender, language dominance and ability. Additional research of this type should also span multiple settings or universities across different departments in education that infuse multicultural perspectives into their coursework.

This exploratory study provides a foundation for further studies that focus on the ways in which White teachers activate a critical consciousness in the classroom so that they may develop high expectations and provide more equitable educational experiences for CLED students. The Whiteness literature in teacher education suggests that white race consciousness or anti-racist pedagogy has not been empirically linked to teacher competence in diverse classrooms or to raise academic achievement of diverse populations (Brandon, 2003; Sheets, 2003).

While my study did not serve to advance this claim, Pajares (1992) notes that teacher beliefs are tied to teacher's decisions about instructional decisions and classroom practice. As a result, evidence of effects on classroom practice and teacher competence with diverse populations must be integrated into studies that examine raised consciousness.

A study of teacher educators' understanding of difference in education would be a logical addition to the body of literature on in-service and pre-service teachers understanding of difference in education, and the influence of such understandings on the ways in which they interact with their pre-service teachers. The link between teacher educators' and pre-service teachers' understanding of difference has not been established empirically, so research that investigates these interrelationships might serve to shed light on what works to develop a critical consciousness.

Finally, the use of collaborative inquiry as research method offers promise for future investigations with pre-service and in-service teachers in general and special education about their understanding of difference because the method allowed us to have candid conversations about difference in relation to our life experience. We need to continue to enact methodologies that reduce the power differential between the researcher and participant(s) within studies that examine such sensitive issues as race, class, gender, and ability. In taking the time to use collaborative inquiry (two-six hour investigations) we were able to unpack our understanding of difference in relation to our life experiences through multiple engagements. Working as a group assisted us in the process of unpacking and

interrogating our life histories and engagements in the course because we were able to respond to each other's stories by juxtaposing our own. As a result we gained a deeper insight that might not have occurred if we simply relied on individual interview. The combined advantage of time and multiple participants allowed us to have conversations we might not have had if it weren't for the prolonged engagement and the multiple perspectives that surrounded us to develop meaning together. Kimberly said:

> *Having these conversations were so interesting. I felt like we talked about issues that I don't talk about with my friends…It could be because those conversations can be painful and hard to say and listen to; it could be because they take time and very few of us have the several hours to devote to those conversations. (CI 1 Reflection, S206, p. 2)*

As a group, the collaboration served to reduce the power differential between researcher and researched because I (the researcher) actively participated in the sharing of my story and meaning making and participants were encouraged to serve the role as researcher. Because the topic of difference to include race, class, gender, ability, can potentially spur on uncomfortable moments, being actively involved as a participant allowed me to join in the journey and for participants to be exposed to my struggle as well. Collaborative inquiry was an effective method to investigate our understandings because it encourages multiple perspectives in the research process by actively engaging the participants as

researchers. Collaborative inquiry is participant driven so the investigation questions, data shared, and analysis encourage involvement and can serve as emancipatory because participants assist in developing and making meaning of the data.

Conclusion

We need to search for hope and possibility as we continue to evoke transformation in teacher preparation programs in special education by providing opportunities to enlighten in-service and pre-service teachers' understanding of difference toward a critical consciousness. This research served to shift the center toward possibility and hope about White women's understanding of difference in education by examining those who had reported a shift in their thinking and looking at what worked to facilitate their growth. Significantly different from traditional approaches to such work, this collaborative inquiry gives voice to those who are typically the subject of inquiry—white teachers—and allows us to be informed by their narratives. Future work in this area should bring us closer to understanding and developing practices that evoke shifts in thinking of pre-service and in-service teachers as they develop ideologies and practice that foster equitable and responsive practices that benefit all learners especially those from CLED backgrounds.

APPENDIX A: COURSE SYLLABUS

Cross-Cultural Interactions In Multicultural Special Education

Syllabus

This course provides an overview of essential concepts related to interpersonal and inter-group communication in culturally diverse settings, and explores the role of culture and language in our ability to communicate effectively in a multicultural society. Implications will be drawn for general and special education programs and services that are responsive to, and appropriate for children, youth and adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Topics for discussion will include local, state and national policy implications; procedures for identification of students with disabilities as well as those with gifts/talents; interactions with culturally diverse families and communities, as well as implications for personnel preparation and research.

Rationale

The increase in cultural and linguistic diversity in U.S. society has been well documented, and is projected to continue; in states such as Texas, public school enrollments are already "majority minority". While this diversity is reflected in student enrollments, the teaching force continues to be predominantly white, middle class, and female. As a group—historically, and in our contemporary educational system—students from diverse socio-cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds experience higher drop out rates, lower achievement, overrepresentation in special education, and underrepresented in programs for gifted/talented students. Their underachievement has, in part, been attributed to the cultural and linguistic discontinuities that result from the demographic differences between students and teachers. Efforts to design more effective programs and curricula must take into account the various cultural, linguistic, experiential, and socioeconomic factors that influence the teaching-learning process. Personnel preparation programs must address the development of intercultural communication skills so that educators and other related service providers can interact successfully with students and their families, plan and implement effective interventions, and ultimately enhance the educational success of all students.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the course is to promote the development of your cross-cultural communication skills by increasing your knowledge of basic principles of intercultural communication and by providing a non-judgmental, non-threatening environment in which to experience the process. A variety of approaches, including class lectures, discussions, simulations, training exercises and student assignments, will be utilized to achieve course objectives related to:

- Knowledge of the cultural dimensions along which groups may demonstrate differences and similarities, with implications for inter-group communication;

- An understanding of the influence of cultural, linguistic, sociological, and psycho-cultural variables on the interpersonal communication process;

- Knowledge of the principles of intercultural communication and implications for general and special education contexts;

- An understanding of the influence of cultural differences on family systems—including socialization of young children—with emphasis on serving culturally diverse families in educational settings;

- Application of the principles of intercultural communication to general and special education contexts, including intervention, assessment, personnel preparation, policy, and research; and

- Increased self-awareness of cultural influences on one's own world view, including values, beliefs, communication patterns, teaching styles and educational philosophy. Implications for personnel preparation and professional growth will be a primary focus of this objective.

Required Texts and Other Readings

Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. Y. (2003). *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kalyanpur, M. & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in Special Education.* Baltimore: Brookes.

Harry, B., Kalyanpur, M., & Day, M. (1999). *Building Cultural Reciprocity with Families: Case Studies in Special Education.* Baltimore: Brookes.

Required readings on E-Reserves at the Library.

Log on to the Library Online and select Electronic Reserves. Look for the course by either department (Special Education) or instructor. This will take you to the course listings, where you can select CCIMSE. Once you're on the course page, you'll need the course password to access the articles (provided in class).

Course Requirements

Grades for the course will be based on the following assignments. More specific guidelines related to each assignment will be discussed in class.

1. Reflective Journal (25%). You will write a series of six reflective journals in which you record your impressions, reactions, reflections and/or any other comments in relation to the topics being discussed in class, your assigned readings and the training activities in which you participate. Use the following questions to guide your reflection (as appropriate each time):

    a. What are your reaction to the course-related readings and experiences that we covered?

    b. Which ideas did you find most meaningful? Why? Which ideas appeared to challenge your thinking? Why?

    c. What values, assumptions, beliefs or expectations appear to be reflected in your reactions?

    d. What implications do you see for your own professional development? (i.e., What understandings, knowledge, skills, do you think you'll need to work successful with students/clients from socio-cultural, ethnic, racial, and/or linguistic backgrounds that are different from your own?)

    Occasionally, you will be given a specific statement or focus by the instructor, to which you should respond in your journal entries. Reflective journal grades will be determined by the extent to which you address the questions above (consider this your grading rubric), and for the depth and quality of your analysis. Grades will not be influenced by the specific ideas or opinions you express; rather I am interested in your ability to support your statements and to distinguish between assumptions, perceptions, emotions, and knowledge. You are encouraged to think critically and to be introspective.

    Each journal entry will be turned in on the dates assigned in the schedule calendar. Please plan to submit individual journal entries (typed, double-spaced) on loose-leaf 8 1/2 x 11" paper, rather than in a book. ***Due dates for journals are: September 16, September 30, October 14, October 28, November 11, and December 2.***

2. Cross-Cultural Dialogue (15%). Gathering information about various cultural groups through dialogue with others can be an effective way to increase our understanding of cultural differences and similarities. Through such dialogues we can increase our knowledge of individual variations and differences that are present within groups on the basis of personality, acculturation, socioeconomic factors, gender, religion and other sub-cultural variations. *For this assignment you will*

interview an individual from a group other than your own, who also represents a culture with which you are NOT very familiar. A cultural interview guide will be developed in class to assist you in framing your questions. Following your interview, you will prepare a written report in which you present your findings and conclusions. ***The written report is due in class on Tuesday October 21.***

3. Critical Analysis of Socio-cultural/Linguistic Diversity in Special Education or Rehabilitation Counseling (25%). For this assignment, select ONE of the following activities, as relevant to your interests, roles and backgrounds:
    a. Analysis of a curriculum in a selected content area for a selected age/grade level (e.g., reading, math, social studies, social skills, life skills, art, etc.);
    b. Review of assessment materials/tests and/or the assessment procedures typically used in psycho-educational or vocational assessment;
    c. Review of a parent program and related activities/interventions targeted at families from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic communities;
    d. Review of policies and guidelines for identification and placement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in gifted or special education. This analysis may be at the district or state level;
    e. Review of policies and guidelines for provision of rehabilitation counseling services to culturally diverse clients;
    f. Review of a teacher- or rehabilitation counselor education program (undergraduate or graduate) for its content re. cultural and linguistic diversity;
    g. Review of a staff development program related to cultural and linguistic diversity (in special education or rehabiliation counseling);
    h. Other. In the event that none of the above options is suitable for you, you may, with my approval, propose a project that is equivalent in addressing course objectives.

    You are expected to notify me in writing of your choice, ***by September 16***. ***The completed assignment is due by 5:00 pm on Friday, December 5.*** Since this is after our last class meeting, please bring projects to my office.

4. Portfolio of Activities and Resources (25%). This assignment is intended to provide you with the opportunity to develop your own library of professional resources related to cultural and/or linguistic diversity. It is designed to be the beginning of the process rather than something you complete by the end of the summer term; i.e., I hope that you will continue to add to it on an ongoing basis and that it will be a valuable tool in your professional kit. You may select one of the two options below:

    Option A: Focus on Practitioners. Think of your portfolio as a resource to support you as a practitioner in your chosen area of special education/ rehabilitation counseling. Your portfolio may include resources related to curriculum, instruction, teaching approaches, counseling procedures, ideas for family-school collaboration, assessment, or any other topics that are relevant to

your current and future role(s). To complete this assignment, you must fulfill the following requirements:

a. Select 8-10 activities that you believe will be effective in achieving their stated goals. These should be 8-10 distinctly different activities, rather than multiple examples of the same topic. For instance, if you compile a set of five books as part of a thematic unit of children's literature, the books you include in your unit count as *one* activity, not five. Additionally, the content of these resources must address some aspect of culture and/or language (e.g., ethnicity, race, class, dialect, bilingualism).

b. For each activity you add to your portfolio, prepare a written summary which includes your rationale for including the activity, a general description of the activity/materials, the stated purpose and target audience (grade, age, disability for which the activity is designed), the specific knowledge and/or skills to be developed, as well as the knowledge/skills required of practitioners to effectively implement the activity.

c. Prepare a brief overview report in which you explain any selection criteria you used to select the activities; and discuss how this portfolio will contribute to your ability to provide culturally- and linguistically-responsive services to learners with disabilities.

Option B*: *Focus on Staff Development and/or Personnel Preparation. Over the semester, you will develop a portfolio of intercultural training/development activities (e.g., simulations, exercises, small group exercises, etc.) that you might use to develop cross-cultural knowledge and skills of educators in pre-service and/or in-service education programs. To complete this assignment, you must fulfill the following requirements:

a. Select 8-10 intercultural training activities that you believe will be effective in achieving their stated outcomes;

b. For each activity you add to your portfolio, prepare a written summary, which includes a general description of the activity, its stated purpose and target audience, the specific cross-cultural knowledge and/or skills to be developed, the prerequisite knowledge/skills required for participants, as well as the knowledge/skills required of trainers/facilitators using the activity.

c. Prepare a brief overview report in which you explain any selection criteria you used to select the activities; and discuss how this portfolio will contribute to your ability to enhance the intercultural competence of participants in a pre-service or in-service education program .

Portfolio content should be supplemental to required assignments, readings and activities. While you are welcome to add these to your portfolio, they will NOT

be considered in the assignment of the grade. ***The portfolio is due on Tuesday, November 18.***

5. Attendance and Participation in Class (10%). Regular attendance is particularly critical to your success in this course, due to the high level of interaction, participation in in-class exercises, simulations, groups discussions and assignments. Therefore, you are expected to attend class regularly, and to participate in these activities. Moreover, "participation" will be measured by (a) the quality of your contributions, (b) the extent of your involvement in in-class activities and dialogue, (c) the level of engagement and analysis reflected in the journals and other assignments. While individual variations in levels of comfort will be respected, it is important that you participate as fully as possible. *No exceptions will be made to the class attendance policy except under extenuating circumstances.*

NOTE: In accordance with UT policy, students who cannot attend class due to observance of a religious holy day must notify the instructor of dates they will be absent. Notifications must be made in writing at least two weeks prior to the expected absence, and arrangements must be made to make up any work that is missed. Students will not be penalized for these excused absences but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to complete satisfactorily the missed assignments or activities within a reasonable time after the absence.

Students with Special Needs

Please notify me of any modification/adaptations you may require to accommodate a disability-related learning need. Every effort will be made to provide materials in an accessible format and to modify procedures to enable your participation and success. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities (471-6259; TDD 471-4641). You are encouraged to explore these available resources and to utilize them to facilitate your success. The SSD website is at: http://www.deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd.

Proposed Schedule of Topics, Required Readings and Due Dates

SEPTEMBER 2

Overview of the course, introductions

Conceptualizing communication and culture in education

SEPTEMBER 9

An approach to the study of intercultural communication

The cultural underpinnings of special education and rehabilitation counseling

Required Readings

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 1-2
Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 1
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 1

SEPTEMBER 16

Cultural influences on communication

Legal and epistemological underpinnings of the construction of disability

Guidelines for cultural dialogue assignment

REQUIRED READINGS

Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 2
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 5 (Brianna)
Readings on E-Reserve: (Lynch, 1998; Sanchez, 1999)	1, 2

DUE: Cultural Review Activity selection form

Journal 1: In addition to your reflections about class so far, please include your goals and expectations for this course.

SEPTEMBER 23

Cultural transmission through the home and school

Family systems, childrearing practices

Socialization through formal education

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 3
Readings on E-Reserve: (Brislin, 2000-2 ch.; Dehyle & LeCompte, 1999)	3-5

SEPTEMBER 30

Formation of racial and ethnic identities

REQUIRED READINGS

Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 6 (Kyle)
Readings on Electronic Reserve: (Lee, 1999; McIntosh, 1990; Tatum, 1992)	6-8

DUE: Journal 2.

OCTOBER 7

Sociocultural influences on the communication process

Family and professional perspectives about disability

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 4
Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 3
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day*)*	Ch. 8 (Rafael)
Readings on E-Reserve: (Mendez-Perez, 2000)	9

OCTOBER 14

Psychocultural influences on the communication process
Examining personal beliefs and assumptions about "strangers"

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 5
Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 4
Readings on E-Reserve: (Bondy & Ross, 1998; Betsinger, et al., 2001)	10, 11

DUE: Journal 3.

OCTOBER 21

Interpreting messages
Verbal messages
Issues in referrals for special education or rehabilitation services

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 7-8
Readings on E-Reserve: (TBA)	

DUE: Cross-Cultural Dialogue Report

OCTOBER 28

Verbal messages (continued)
Nonverbal messages
Issues in assessment and diagnosis

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 8-9
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 1 (Sylvia)
Readings on E-Reserve: (García, 2002; others TBA)	12

***DUE**: Journal 4.*

NOVEMBER 4

THE POSTURE OF CULTURAL RECIPROCITY

Communicating effectively in intercultural settings
Building successful home-school/agency partnerships

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 10
Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 5
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 7 (Theresa Marie)

NOVEMBER 11

Culturally and linguistically responsive services

REQUIRED READINGS

Culture in Special Education (Kalyanpur & Harry)	Ch. 5, contd.
Building Cultural Reciprocity…(Harry, Kalyanpur & Day)	Ch. 2 (Carissa) and Ch. 5 (Maldon)
Readings on E-Reserve:	(TBA)

DUE: Journal 5.

NOVEMBER 18

Conflict management in intercultural settings
The reflective practitioner

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 11
Readings on E-Reserve:	(TBA)

DUE: Portfolio of Activities and Resources

NOVEMBER 25

Building community in a multicultural society
Developing partnerships with CLD communities

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 15
Bridging Cultures (Trumbull et al.)	Ch. 6
Readings on E-Reserve:	(TBA)

DECEMBER 2 (last class day)

Course-Instructor Survey
Becoming Intercultural

REQUIRED READINGS

Communicating with Strangers (Gudykunst & Kim)	Ch. 14
Readings on E-Reserve:	(TBA)

DUE: Journal 6 (Final)

DECEMBER 5 (No class)

DUE: Review of Culture in Education

Please bring your projects to my office, no later than 5:00pm. The office is closed for lunch from 12 noon to 1:00pm.

Packet of Required Readings

1. Lynch, E. W. (1998). Developing cross-cultural competence. In E. W. Lynch & M. J. Hanson (Eds.), *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families* (pp. 47-89) (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

2. Sanchez, S. Y. (1999). Learning from the stories of culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities: A sociohistorical lens. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*, 351-359.

3. Brislin, R. (2000). Socialization. In, *Understanding culture's influence on behavior* (pp. 112-153) (2nd ed.). Ft. Worth, TX: Thompson Learning.

4. Brislin, R. (2000). Formal educational experiences. In, *Understanding culture's influence on behavior* (pp. 154-164) (2nd ed.). Ft. Worth, TX: Thompson Learning.

5. Dehyle, D., & LeCompte, M. (1999). Cultural differences in child development: Navajo adolescents in middle schools. In R. Hernandez-Sheets & E. Hollins (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity in school practices* (pp. 123-139). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

6. Lee, S. J. (1999). "Are you Chinese or what?" Ethnic identity among Asian Americans. In R. Hernandez-Sheets & E. Hollins (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity in school practices* (pp. 107-121). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

7. McIntosh, P. (1990) White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Independent School, 49*(2), 32-36.

8. Tatum, B. D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review, 62*, 1-24.

9. Mendez-Perez, A. (2000). Mexican American mothers' perceptions and beliefs about language acquisition in infants and toddlers with disabilities. *Bilingual Research Journal, 24*, 225-242.

10. Bondy, E., & Ross, D. D. (1998). Confronting myths about teaching Black children: A challenge for teacher educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 21,* 241-254.

11. Betsinger, A., García, S. B., & Guerra, P. (2001). Addressing teachers' beliefs about diverse students through staff development. *Journal of Staff Development, 22*(2), 24-27.

12. García, S. B. (2002). Parent-professional collaboration in culturally sensitive assessment. In A. J. Artiles & A. A. Ortiz (Eds.) *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction* (Chapter 5). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

APPENDIX B: BELIEF SURVEY

Organizing for Diversity Project
Beliefs Survey10

Date: _____ ID # _____

True or False? Why?

This is *not a test*, and there are no "right answers" per se. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Please read each of the following statements and label them true or false. Below each statement provide a rationale for your answer, including an example when needed.

_____1. Knowing a students' cultural and socioeconomic background allows teachers to predict how that student will perform in the classroom.

_____2. Individual with Disabilities Education Act is a cultural document

_____3. Teachers who celebrate Cinco de Mayo and Black History Month are doing a good job of addressing multicultural education in their classrooms.

_____4. At risk youth as a group are not as successful in school as other students.

_____5. All students enter school eager and ready to learn.

_____6. It is reasonable for teachers to assume that most families, including most poor and minority families, value education.

[10] Belief survey originally from Betsinger, A. M., García, S., B., & Guerra, P., L. (2000). *Research report for the organizing for diversity project* (Appendix C). Austin, TX: The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

_____7. The purpose of multicultural education is to teach minority students how to fit in the mainstream culture.

_____8. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.

_____9. Standard English is the only appropriate language for the classroom.

_____10. Students can have their own values, but in class they must adhere to the values of the school and classroom.

Open Ended Questions

1. I believe the three most important qualities of a good teacher are *:

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. I believe the three most important qualities of an ideal student are*:

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. I believe the following three words best describe minority students*:

   _____

   _____

   _____

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Demographic Questionnaire11

Date:_____ ID#:_____

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's Organizing for Diversity Project (ODP) staff would appreciate it if you would respond to the following questions or complete the following statements. The information you provide will be used solely for the purposes of the research study conducted by the ODP staff. From this information, a profile of the participants will be derived and training materials will be developed. The information you provide will be kept in strictest confidence and destroyed upon completion of the study.

I. PERSONAL DATA

1. Age (Circle the range.): 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-60 61+
2. Gender (Circle the correct response.) Male Female
3. What ethnic groups are represented in your family (i.e., parents)?

   _____

   Of the ethnic groups named above, with which do you most identify?

   _____
4. Do you know any language(s) other than English? Yes No

   If yes, identify the language(s)?_____

For the four communication skills listed below, check the level of language proficiency which best describes your ability to function in the language other than English you identified above. (If you are multilingual, select the language other than English in which you are most proficient.)

a. listening: ___ beginner ___ intermediate ___ advanced ___ fluent
b. speaking: ___ beginner ___ intermediate ___ advanced ___ fluent
c. reading: ___ beginner ___ intermediate ___ advanced ___ fluent
d. writing: ___ beginner ___ intermediate ___ advanced ___ fluent

5. How many years have you taught?_

[11] Demographic Questionnaire originally from Betsinger, A. M., García, S., B., & Guerra, P., L. (2000). *Research report for the organizing for diversity project* (Appendix B). Austin, TX: The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

6. Below each of the categories listed, circle which of the phrases best describes the majority of students you have taught.

Ethnicity	**Location**	**Economic Status**
mostly white	a. urban	a. mostly upper income
mostly minority	b. suburban	b. mostly middle income
Identify: _____	c. rural	c. mostly lower income
ethnically mixed		
other: _____		

7. What grade level(s) and subject/content area(s) have you taught?

Grade level(s): _____

_____

Subject area(s):_____ All (elementary core)

Other:_____

_____

8. Circle your **current** teaching assignment(**s**).

General Education Gifted and Talented Education Bilingual Education

Special Education Title I English as a Second Language Migrant Education

Other: _____

9. List **ANY** job(s) you may have held **PRIOR** to teaching.

a. _____ e._____

b. _____ f._____

c. _____ g._____

d. _____ h._____

II. Sociological Background

10. Below each of the categories listed, circle the term that best describes the neighborhood where you currently live.

Ethnicity	Location	Economic Status
mostly white	a. urban	a. mostly upper income
. mostly minority	b. suburban	b. mostly middle income
Identify: _____	c. rural	c. mostly lower income
ethnically mixed		
. other: _____		

11. What was your father's primary occupation when you were growing up?

_____

12. What was your mother's primary occupation when you were growing up?

_____

13. Below each of the categories listed, circle the term that best describes the neighborhood where you grew up.

Ethnicity	Location	Economic Status
mostly white	a. urban	a. mostly upper income
. mostly minority	b. suburban	b. mostly middle income
Identify: _____	c. rural	c. mostly lower income
ethnically mixed		
. other: _____		

14. As a child or adolescent, did you and your family experience any moves from one community to another? If so, how many times did this occur?_____

III. Education

15. Below each of the categories listed, circle the type of school, the ethnicity of the student population, and the ethnicity of the teachers at the schools you attended. If you attended more than one school during the grade levels listed, particularly if you experienced frequent moves, think of the one in which you spent the most time, then respond accordingly.

	Type of School	**Ethnicity of Students**	**Ethnicity of Teachers**
Elementary School:	a. public b. private	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____
Middle/Junior High School:	a. public b. private	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____
High School:	a. public b. private	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____
College/University:	a. public b. private	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____	a. mostly white b. mostly minority Identify:_____ c. ethnically mixed d. other: _____

16. Where did you receive your degree(s)?

Bachelor/Undergraduate Degree

University_____Year graduated_____

Major_____ Minor (if applicable)_____

Area of specialization: _____

Masters Degree

University_____Year graduated_____

Major_____ Minor (if applicable)_____

Area of specialization: _____

Ph.D./other professional degree

University_____Year graduated_____

Major_____ Minor (if applicable)_____

Area of specialization: _____

Alternative Certification Program

Institution_____Year certified _____

17. List the type(s) of certification you have been awarded (e.g., Bilingual, Supervisory, Curriculum, Emergency, etc.).

_____

_____

_____

IV. Contact with Diverse Groups

18. Circle the frequency of your contact with ethnic group(s) different from your own, during the following time periods—from elementary school to present. Also, circle whether the experience(s) were generally positive, neutral, or negative.

	Frequency	**Nature**
Elementary School:	a. daily b. often (on a weekly basis) c. occasionally d. rarely (several times a year) e. never	a. generally positive b. generally neutral c. generally negative

List the ethnic group(s) referenced in your response. _____

_____

Middle/Junior High School:	a. daily b. often (on a weekly basis) c. occasionally d. rarely (several times a year) e. never	a. generally positive b. generally neutral c. generally negative

List the ethnic group(s) referenced in your response. _____

_____

High School:	a. daily b. often (on a weekly basis) c. occasionally d. rarely (several times a year) e. never	a. generally positive b. generally neutral c. generally negative

List the ethnic group(s) referenced in your response. _____

_____

College/University:	a. daily b. often (on a weekly basis) c. occasionally d. rarely (several times a year) e. never	a. generally positive b. generally neutral c. generally negative

List the ethnic group(s) referenced in your response. _____

_____

Currently: (outside of school)	a. daily b. often (on a weekly basis) c. occasionally d. rarely (several times a year) e. never	a. generally positive b. generally neutral c. generally negative

List the ethnic group(s) referenced in your response. _____

_____

19. Circle the phrase that best identifies the diversity among your circle of friends at the following times:

Elementary School:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____

Middle/Junior High School:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____

High School:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____

College/University:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____

Currently:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____

20. Circle the phrase that best identifies the diversity among your co-workers at the following times:

High School:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____
- e. did not work

College/University:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____
- e. did not work

Your most recent job prior to your position at this school:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed
- d. other: _____
- e. did not work

Your current position:
- a. mostly white
- b. mostly minority
  Identify: _____
- c. ethnically mixed

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Sample Interview Questions

- In what way did the course have an impact on you?
- Overall, how do you think differently about difference in education?
    - More specifically how do you think differently about culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse exceptional learners?
    - Why? What do you think led to this change in perspective?
- Which content from the course influenced a change in your perspective or shifted your thinking about CLED students?

- Tell me more about your experiences growing up.
    - What were your experiences with difference?
    - What were your schooling experiences like? What was the racial and ethnic make-up of the schools you attended?
    - Did you have experiences with CLED kids growing up?
    - What was your neighborhood like growing up?
    - Were there topics or discussions from the course that reminded you of experiences growing up?
    - What does your family think about diversity?
    - What was the nature of your relationship with people of color growing up? Did you have friends of color growing up?
    - Did you have experiences dating people of color? If so, what was your family's reaction?

- In what way do you think the content from the course has impacted your teaching practices? Give an example.
- How do you see curricula/instructional practices differently as a result of the training?
- What role does your changed perspective have on classroom practice, relationships with students and their families?
- How do you see the content from other courses differently as a result of this class?
- What would you add to current teacher training/coursework?

- In what way did you respond differently to the belief survey? Why?
- In what way did your personal experiences or content from the course influence your responses to the belief survey?

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE EMAIL

Hi [potential participant's name]-

I recently passed my dissertation proposal and received approval from the University to begin my dissertation study entitled, A collaborative inquiry with White women about their understanding of difference in education. I am writing because I am looking for participants and Dr. Morales suggested that you might be a good candidate:)

For my dissertation study, I am interested in exploring with you specific course content and/or life experiences that influenced your understanding of difference in education, particularly related to race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, culture, language dominance, and ability.

To begin, I will ask you to re-take the belief survey you completed at the beginning of the semester, and a demographic survey. Then, I will meet with each of you individually to get feedback on your responses to the surveys and explore the impact of CCIMSE and your personal life experiences on your beliefs about working with CLED students. The second half of the research will entail two collaborative inquiries. We will all get together at my home for two 6-8 hour days. During the first inquiry we will collaboratively explore our understanding of difference in relation to our life experience and learning from the course. During the second inquiry we will work together make meaning of the data and construct portraits from our stories.

In all I would like to conduct one interview to last about an hour and then two collaborative inquiries to last 6-8 hours each in my home on a given Saturday a month a part. My hope is to conduct one inquiry in July and the second inquiry in August (if these months are not convenient for you please let me know as I am flexible). To follow up when the study is complete, I would like to be in touch via email or phone for additional questions, clarifications and to get feedback on final data analysis.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. For your convenience I have attached a copy of the consent form for you to review. If you participate in this study, you will help me greatly with my dissertation and to add to our current

understanding of how White women understand difference in education. If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact me via email at bdray@mail.utexas.edu, phone 294-1250. Thanks for your time and consideration. I would appreciate hearing from you [one week after email is sent]. I look forward to hearing from you.

I hope that you are interested and available to participate in my study as I think you would be a great asset:)

I look forward to hearing from you either way.

Take care
Barbara
--

[insert my current contact information]

APPENDIX F: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY #1 PROMPT

Collaborative Inquiry #1 – Prompt

Today we are going to focus on our life histories or stories as they relate to our collective understanding of difference such as race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Each of us will take about 45 minutes to share our story. During this time I hope that those who are not sharing/speaking will sit back and listen. I have given each of you note pads so if questions arise or insights emerge you can jot them down. So as not to interrupt the person speaking but to still capture your thoughts. Clarifying questions may be asked but try not to interrupt the person as your questions might be answered as the person shares. Sharing your story is a sacred practice and I do not want anyone to feel threatened or as if their story is not important.

At the end of the day, I will ask each of you to take time for a quick write reflection on your experience. In particular, I would like you to reflect on the following questions:

16. What did you learn about yourself?

17. What did you learn from other's stories?

18. What was striking to you?

19. What was similar or different across the stories shared?

I will give you a piece of paper with these questions so that you can either write your response and hand it in today OR take it home and email me your responses by Monday, November 22.

Okay so how do you want to do this? Would you like to go around the room, any volunteers to go first or draw numbers?

APPENDIX G: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY #1 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reactions to Collaborative Inquiry #1

Participant _____

1. What did you learn about yourself (a) as you told your story and (b) as you listened to other stories?

2. From other's stories, what insights did you learn about the way we understand difference?

3. What was striking to you?

4. What did you find to be similar or different across the stories shared?

Similarities	Differences

APPENDIX H: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY #2 DETAILED AGENDA

Collaborative Inquiry #2: Making Meaning of the Data

December 5, 2004
PART I

1. Start by reviewing your data from the individual interview and collaborative inquiry #1. Outline your story making major ideas as headers with key points underneath. The purpose of this exercise is to clarify any points you feel are especially important, to add to the data as you feel necessary, and to cut or cross off information you feel is not important. It also serves as a member check to be sure you are being understood as you intended to be heard.

2. Highlight what about the course with Dr. Morales influenced a shift in your thinking.

3. Highlight the life experiences that you believe shaped your understanding of difference today.

PART II

Then we will post this information on the wall and each take turns reviewing our findings. After each person has had an opportunity to share, we will then start to look for patterns or themes that are emerge across the data. What is striking?

We will look for similarities and differences?

PART III

During lunch we will take the opportunity to chat and I will discuss some ideas I have about formatting my dissertation. I hope to get feedback and your ideas on how I should frame the study.

Some Ideas I have:

Chapter 4: What about our life experiences shape what we believe? How have we shifted?

Chapter 5: What are the structural forces that influence what we believe? Emotional aspects of the experience and that shape who we are in understanding difference.

Chapter 6: What about the course helped shift our thinking?

Chapter 7: Implications and conclusions for MCSE training with White women in education.

PART IV

Now that we have created some initial patterns or themes, I would like each of us to pair off and go through our partner's data and look for these themes. Concrete examples of the patterns we have talked about.

4. Why are we doing this?

5. We need to validate the patterns we think we see.

6. New patterns may emerge as we actually read the data that we did not realize before.

7. We may decide that there is not enough evidence for other patterns we thought we saw.

Now, you may then ask why I am I asking you to code the data: I am dedicated to understanding (a) your perspective of the data as well as (b) our collective understanding of the data. Since the method is participatory and emancipatory I see you as a vital lens in understanding the data as well. I may interpret things very differently if it were only me but I see this as your opportunity to have you understanding heard. Rather our collective understanding heard. I don't want to impose my understanding alone, I want you to be active. In general when people do research on others they interpret the data and then give participants and opportunity to respond and many participants do not really read the data b/c it is (a) time consuming, (b) they don't understand the rhetoric, (c) not interested, (d) too painful and so on. So I am committed to having you involved because our voices is what is missing in the research.

Once we have found evidence of these themes/patterns we will take some time to make charts of examples of each theme/pattern and begin to assign codes to these examples. For example say one theme is family structure has had an influence on our understanding. So we may find multiple examples of family structure, for Barbara/me it is single parent, two siblings with

divorced father, abusive. For Lauren it is oldest sibling, two parents, affluent home. So the codes for each of these themes would look differently.

APPENDIX I: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY #2 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Response to Collaborative Inquiry # 2 and overall methodology

Participant #_____

Please take a moment to review and respond to the following questions. After you have completed them, you can email your responses to me at bdray@mail.utexas.edu

1. What were your impressions of the methodology in answering our questions about (a) what about the course fostered a shift in thinking, and (b) in what way have our life experiences shaped what we believe about difference?

2. What did you like about the methodology? What would you change/add to the methodology?

3. What are your overall impressions or understandings of what we found out about our selves and as a collective?

4. How or in what way did this experience (being in the study) impact you?

5. Of the themes we noted about the class that impacted a shift in our thinking about difference … Do you think it is a combination of all the ideas we noted or one over another? Please explain your response and feel free to add to this list or add details to a theme.

Safe Environment

Respected for their ideas; Not Judged
Meet people where they are at - cannot force your beliefs on another person

Recurring Themes

Read material that reinforced concepts
Listened to multiple perspectives presented by peers

Interactive discussion [exposure to multiple/different perspectives]

Learned from each other
Unpack best practices
Learned from both professional literature that expressed multiple perspectives as well as personal relationships with peers in class who expressed multiple perspectives

Dialogic Reflection

Helped to dialogue about their inner thoughts
Act of reflection and interacting with their own beliefs – did not have that opportunity before
Act of having another person respond to their inner thoughts

Framework for Understanding Difference (tools for understanding and responding)

Theoretical; intercultural, cross-cultural communication, racial identity formation, knowing yourself
Responding to difference in new [informed] ways; mindfulness, culturally responsive pedagogy,

The destination is a journey not a stagnant place of arrival

The goal is to realize the journey and let go of the idea of arriving at a destination

6. Please explain your religious background: Denomination, name of place of worship, religious upbringing versus current religious belief/practice.

APPENDIX J: COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY #1: MY REFLECTION RESPONSES

Participant S200 Reflections CI #1

1. **What did you learn about yourself (a) as you told your story and (b) as you listened to other stories?**

I learned that I am no longer angry in the same way and yet I felt an overwhelming sadness as I heard Kimberly talk about her experiences growing up. I saw how her unawareness of who I really am as a representative of someone from the lower class gave her more power. It was a very validating experience for me to both hear the stories of those who were raised in the privileged class and to hear Renee's story of the pain because I remember that pain of not fitting in and feeling like somehow I had control over getting people to like me or to fit in.

I realized that I have a desire to really help people change through understanding but I too am human and have emotions. That being a participant in the research gave me less empathy or desire to understand the privilege that led to how they understand difference.

2. **From other's stories, what insights did you learn about the way we understand difference?**

I heard in the tone or confidence in which people spoke about their privilege. There seemed to be a sadness or anger behind the stories that Renee and I told versus a shame, guilt or apologetic tone of the women raised in more privilege. As they are trying to get over their privilege and feel bad that others did not have it…they we all should have it. Yet, there is part of me that never wants it because I can see things, I feel things, I understand things differently because I lived it.

There are so many emotions tied into who we are and how we see difference. That is it difficult having privilege when you realize what others do not have and that it is difficult not having privilege when you see what others do have. There seems to be a parody. I wonder how we can work through these difficult emotions toward a sense of pride for our different experiences so we can cut across the pain and truly understand with out judgment?

3. **What was striking to you?**

The class differences were very striking to me and seemed to separate us into two groups. I was expecting us to share the ways we were influenced to shift our understanding away from a deficit perspective and yet there seemed to be more of

a chronological account of how we understood things when we were young toward how we understand difference as an adult. In a lot of ways this was very painful. On the one hand, listening to the privilege and on the other listening to the difficult childhood memories. I don't want to think of my experience with my abusive father as a "good" thing that we need to experience in order to understand oppression. Yet having that experience has undoubtledly given me an insight on questioning those who dominant and why?

4. **What did you find to be similar or different across the stories shared?**

Similarities	**Differences**
All white women	Different class backgrounds
Taken MCSE Course	Different majors in SE
Desire to continue on journey toward understanding difference	Variety of understandings of difference, some still deficit
SE graduate students	Various levels of students
All taught	Worked in a variety of school settings – age, racial, linguistic, disability
Empathic listeners	Some have experience with Adults with disabilities
Desire to understand each other	Various occupations within the field
Mindful of each other	Family structure – single mother, 2 parent home
All have siblings	Single/married
Professional status – middle class now	Experiences with people of color when younger - friendships
All straight	Biracial relationships
All have friends from MC backgrounds as an adult	Counseling – talk therapy
No children	Bireligious relationships
	Traumatic experiences – car accident
	Deaf sibling
	Transgender sibling
	Experience/no experience with disabilities prior to college

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VITA

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