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Becoming Multicultural Teachers: An Exploration of Transformation in White Female Elementary Educators

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BECOMING MULTICULTURAL TEACHERS:

AN EXPLORATION OF TRANSFORMATION IN

WHITE FEMALE ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

by

LEE WOODHAM DIGIOVANNI

(Under the Direction of Delores D. Liston)

ABSTRACT

As the population of the United States becomes more diverse, and the teaching force remains predominantly White, multicultural education becomes more and more important. Many White elementary educators, however, treat multicultural education in a very cursory, shallow way. Some educators, however, have moved beyond a cursory approach to multicultural education. Utilizing feminist standpoint theory informed by postpositivist realism and critical race theory, this study examines the experiences of three White female elementary educators in the same school system in the Metropolitan Atlanta area who have moved beyond cursory implementation of multicultural teaching. Potential participants were screened using the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and classroom observations. Two interviews were held with each participant that examined racial memories, understandings about multicultural education, white privilege, and racism. These interviews were then analyzed to determine if there were moments of rupture that impacted the participants' identity, which then in turn has helped them understand the importance of multicultural education principles. The understandings of these teachers are important to both practitioners and teacher educators who are seeking to develop these understandings in the upcoming teaching force, as

diversity shall continue to be an ever present force in our schools, and the teaching

population is forecasted to remain predominantly White and female.

INDEX WORDS: Multicultural Education, White Identity, Elementary Teachers,
                 Feminist Standpoint Theory, Critical Race Theory, Postpositivist
                 Realist Theory of Identity

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Elizabeth and Ashley. May you always have the strength and courage to follow your dreams.

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Words barely express the tremendous amount of gratitude and respect I have for my dissertation chair, Delores Liston. I am very thankful for her guidance and friendship through this process, and the support she has given me in some of the more trying hours. I also thank my committee members, Ming Fang He, Leon Spencer, and Lori Amy for their input and suggestions. Their direction and assistance has been invaluable.

I also wish to thank the department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading at Georgia Southern University. The Curriculum Studies program was exactly the doctoral program I had been seeking for many years, and I came to life with the coursework and the challenges. The Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading Department also bestowed a great honor to me by recognizing me with the Bryan Deever Memorial Scholarship during my coursework. I hope that I continue to live up to that honor.

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Further acknowledgements need to be given to my co-workers who have quietly supported me over the past few years, recognizing when my plate was overflowing and stepping in to make sure that my sanity stayed in check. I will always be thankful for their support. Thanks as well to the women in the Gamma Nu chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma and to the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation for their scholarship assistance.

Finally, I bestow tremendous gratitude and thanks to my family who supported me through this process. I could not have completed this program without their help, patience, and love.

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No man is an island, entire of itself;

every man is a piece of the continent,

a part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,

Europe is the less,

as well as if a promontory were,

as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were:

any man's death diminishes me,

because I am involved in mankind,

and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;

it tolls for thee.

John Donne (1624)

CHAPTER ONE

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

School Bells

From August to June, approximately 300,000 elementary students get up each morning and head to school in the Metropolitan Atlanta Area (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2004, p. 252, p. 256). With each passing year, the elementary students who respond to the sound of the bell are increasingly diverse. Metropolitan Atlanta, a ten county area in north Georgia, is highly representative of the urban and suburban south. The Metropolitan Atlanta area is also a segment of the country that has seen a ten percent decrease in the White population between the years 1990 and 2000 primarily due to population growth among people moving into the region. The White population of this area in the year 2000 represented sixty-one percent of the population, while the African American population grew to 30.22%, the Asian population increased to 3.5%, and the Hispanic population rose to 6.93%. In certain pockets of the Metropolitan Atlanta area, African Americans represent the majority of residents (Clayton and Dekalb Counties), while Fulton County has less White residents than other races combined (Atlanta Census 2000) (see Table 1).

The Metropolitan Atlanta area reflects national demographic trends in becoming more diverse. Census data shows that the United States as a whole is becoming more diverse in terms of population. The 1990 census showed that 75.6% of the entire United States population was White; the 2000 census reflected 69.4% of the population as White (US Census Bureau, 2004b). By the year 2050 it is expected that the White population in the United States will equal nearly half the total population of our country at 50.1% (US

Table 1: 2000 Population by Race/Ethnicity, numerically and percentage for ARC Counties as well as Percent change in population since 1990

County	White Total	%	% change	African American Total	%	% change	Asian Total	%	% change	Other Total	%	% change	Hispanic[1] Total	%	% change
Cherokee	131,128	92.4	+49.9	3,525	2.5	+120.5	1,141	0.8	+235.6	6,109	4.2	+662.7	7,965	5.4	+593.2
Clayton	89,741	37.9	-32.0	121,927	51.6	+181.1	10,629	4.5	+118.2	14,220	6.0	+702.9	17,728	7.5	+389.2
Cobb	439,991	72.4	+12.1	114,233	18.8	+159.4	18,587	3.1	+148.4	34,940	5.7	+817.5	46,964	7.7	+422.1
DeKalb	238,521	35.8	-18.4	361,111	54.2	+56.6	26,718	4.0	+67.3	39,515	5.9	+471.5	52,542	7.9	+262.6
Douglas	71,235	77.3	+9.9	17,065	18.5	+214.7	1,080	1.2	+171.4	2,794	3.0	+454.4	2,640	2.9	+223.5
Fayette	76,541	83.9	+32.8	10,465	11.5	+226.9	2,208	2.4	+88.9	2,049	2.2	+383.3	2,582	2.8	+185.9
Fulton	392,598	48.1	+26.6	363,656	44.6	+12.2	24,823	3.0	+205.3	34,929	4.3	+423.8	48,056	5.9	+258.1
Gwinnett	427,883	72.7	+33.1	78,224	13.3	+333.4	42,360	7.2	+328.7	39,981	6.8	+1017.1	64,137	10.9	+694.2
Henry	97,116	81.4	+86.5	17,523	14.7	+191.2	2,096	1.8	+444.4	2,606	2.2	+879.7	2,692	2.3	+507.7
Rockdale	53,100	75.7	+8.6	12,771	18.2	+194.0	1,340	1.9	+197.8	2,900	4.1	+655.2	4,182	6.0	+738.1
ARC Region	2,017,854	58.8	+14.7	1,100,500	32.1	+61.7	130,982	3.8	+166.9	180,043	5.3	+616.8	249,218	7.3	+375.8

(Information consolidated from Sjoquist & Pandey, 2002, pp. 4 – 6).

---

[1] As Sjoquist & Pandy (2002) note, "Hispanics are not a separate racial group and thus are included in the other categories" (p. 4).

Census Bureau, 2004a). In the state of Georgia, however, the demographic shift will affect our schools much sooner than 2050. White students are forecasted to represent less than half of the student population as early as the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2004, p. 25).

While the population is shifting from majority White to majority people of color, the elementary teaching population remains fairly consistent. If one were to walk into the "typical" elementary classroom in the Metropolitan Atlanta area, one would find a teacher who is female and White. In fiscal year 2003, 70% of public school elementary educators were White in the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Similar to the figures in the 2000 census, some school systems in the Metropolitan Atlanta area have larger numbers of African American teachers than White (Atlanta City and DeKalb County), but overall most school systems in the Metropolitan Atlanta area find that their elementary teaching staff is 87% White or higher (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, personal communication, November 8, 2004) (see Table 2). This trend is also visible nationwide, as "83.5% of traditional public elementary school teachers…are White" (Marx, 2004, p. 31). Interestingly, this trend is expected to continue, as people of color choose areas of employment other than the field of education (Chaika, 2001; Dunne, 2000). Male elementary educators are also exceedingly rare, as they represent just nine percent of the elementary teaching force nationwide (National Education Association, 2004), and only six percent of elementary educators in the Metro Atlanta in 2003 (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, personal communication, November 8, 2004).

White females then, will continue to be the people who provide primary education for a majority of all students in both the Metropolitan Atlanta area and the United States.

Table 2: Elementary Grades (P-5) Teachers in Metro Atlanta School Systems by Ethnicity (2003)

System	White		African American		Asian		Other		Hispanic		Total
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
Atlanta City	503	22.8	1618	73.0	12	0.5	4	0.2	67	3.0	2204
Buford City	59	89.4	7	10.6	0	0	0	00	0		66
Cherokee	764	99.3	3	0.4	0	0	0	0	2	0.3	769
Clayton	724	57.0	533	42.0	4	0.3	0	0	7	0.6	1268
Cobb	2491	87.9	298	10.5	14	0.5	13	0.5	18	0.6	2834
Decatur City	70	68.0	24	23.3	0	0	0	0	9	8.7	103
DeKalb	1118	37.5	1776	59.6	20	0.7	26	0.9	39	1.3	2979
Douglas	487	91.5	38	7.1	4	0.8	0	0	3	0.6	532
Fayette	501	94.2	19	3.6	2	0.4	0	0	1	0.2	523
Fulton	1377	67.3	610	29.8	17	0.8	4	0.2	39	1.9	2047
Gwinnett	2992	89.9	262	7.9	30	0.9	6	0.2	37	1.1	3327
Henry	627	87.8	78	10.9	5	0.7	0	0	4	0.6	714
Marietta City	206	74.1	59	21.2	2	0.7	1	0.4	10	3.6	278
Rockdale	312	91.0	30	8.7	0	0	0	0	1	0.3	343
Total	12231	68.0	5349	29.7	110	0.6	54	0.3	237	1.3	17987

With each ringing of the school bell, White female elementary teachers will face a population of students who have increasingly different cultural understandings and mores than they have. Many of these educators face immense frustration in these settings, as a recent study in the state of Georgia shows there tends to be a higher turnover for White teachers at schools that predominantly serve students of color (Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2002).

More diverse elementary school settings, yet a predominantly White teacher population is the context from which my research question emerges: *How do White women become multicultural educators?* I see multicultural education as crucial in all elementary settings, regardless of the racial makeup of the students at the school. The elementary level is where students hone the foundational academic skills and knowledge that carries them through the rest of their school career. Schools that serve

predominantly White students have just as much of a need (if not more) for multicultural

education; all students need to see both themselves and others in the curriculum; all

students need to learn how to live and work together and overcome racism. Diversity is

inevitable; ignoring it in our teaching is a recipe for failure.

Meanwhile, many elementary educators are unfamiliar with multicultural

education principles. Within the state of Georgia, most teacher education programs do

not include multicultural education as part of its curriculum.[2] Many teachers do not

experience multicultural education courses until they reach the graduate level, and even

then classes about multicultural education are not required but are electives. In fact, of

the colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia that have graduate

programs in Early Childhood Education, only the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State

University, Armstrong Atlantic State University, and Georgia College and State

University require multicultural education for Master's level coursework.[3] In 2004,

however, 46.6 percent of all educators in Georgia were only certified at the Bachelor's

degree level (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2004, p. 12). Consequently, a

majority of educators in Georgia may have never been exposed to multicultural education

concepts through teacher education. Several school systems in the Metropolitan Atlanta

area, such as Fayette and Gwinnett, have initiated cultural diversity training for its

educators in an effort to move teachers to becoming more culturally responsive. Some

researchers, however, have concluded that training programs and teacher education

---

[2] A notable exception to this is Georgia State University, which requires Early Childhood Education majors
to take Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Education (Georgia State University, 2003, p. 13). During
fiscal year 2003, however, Georgia State University produced only 10.4% of all new teachers K-12 in
teacher education programs in Georgia (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2004, p. 108).
[3] This information was ascertained by researching Early Childhood Education programs of study at each of
the University System of Georgia institutions that offer degrees in Early Childhood Education.

practices are marginally effective in helping White educators to become multicultural

educators (Baltodano, 1998; Meyer-Lee, 1999; Sleeter in Miner & Peterson, 2001).

<div style="text-align:center">Multicultural Education and Multicultural Educators</div>

Currently, with each tolling of the school bell, many education practices that have

been adopted on the elementary level that are considered multicultural are superficial at

best. Educational practices that worked in predominantly White settings for a majority of

the students (and are familiar and comfortable to the practitioner) remain the pedagogical

strategies of many educators, themselves predominantly White, yet the population that

these educators serve is increasingly multicultural (Delpit, 1995). For many teachers, the

implementation of multicultural education remains somewhat unclear and incomplete, if

not halfhearted. Indeed, the large and growing body of work that delineates various

approaches to multicultural education (e.g. Banks, 1995; Darling-Hammond, et al, 2002;

Delpit, 1995; Howard, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999, 2000;

Obidah & Teel, 2001; Sleeter, 1996) remains largely unimplemented. I believe Sonia

Nieto (2000) defines multicultural education best when she states:

> Multicultural education … challenges and rejects racism and other forms of
>
> discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism
>
> (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that
>
> students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education
>
> permeates the schools' curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as the
>
> interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the very way that schools
>
> conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical
>
> pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and

action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes

democratic principles of social justice. (p. 305)

This definition strikes at the heart of multicultural education. Many educators can see the

need for culturally responsive pedagogy, as Sleeter (1996) has discussed how some

multicultural education approaches focus on raising achievement of students of color.

This definition of Nieto's, though, takes multicultural education a step further, focusing

on the importance of challenging and rejecting racism. Those who have experienced the

negative effects of racism easily identify with this crucial aspect of multicultural

education. I believe, however, that this aspect is much harder for a White educator to

comprehend. Sleeter (in Miner and Peterson, 2001) and Howard (1999) both attest to the

difficulty that White educators have in making a transition to multicultural education, as

White educators are not as conscious of race, or the pervasiveness of racism. For White

educators, Whiteness is "the centerpiece of a constant and undifferentiated milieu,

unnoticed in its normalcy" (Howard, 1999, p. 11). Those White educators who are

conscious of racism and its pervasiveness are those educators who comprehend that the

identity of both themselves and their students plays an important role in education. When

the school bell rings, these educators realize that the "normalcy" of Whiteness is not

"normal" to all of their students.

To be a multicultural educator, I believe that one must have an understanding of

her identity and place in the world. A multicultural educator is someone who recognizes

that identity is multifaceted. No matter who she is, she sees that identity is influenced by

sociocultural context. That is, if a multicultural educator is White, she recognizes that

her place in the world is influenced by the fact that she is White. She also recognizes that

those who are not White experience the world in different ways than she does because of her positioning within the dominant culture. Social class and gender also impact this educator's identity, for she understands that she would experience the world differently if her class or gender were changed.

But how does one get to this point? How does one reach the point where one has an understanding of her identity and place in the world? How does a White woman become a multicultural educator? Perhaps there is a moment of rupture, where a White woman recognizes that she has an identity, which allows her to take steps towards being more of a multicultural educator. These questions guide this dissertation, as I seek to pinpoint a moment of rupture among White, female elementary educators who have moved beyond cursory implementation of multicultural education to the space where the margin becomes central, and the traditional curriculum becomes transformed. This dissertation will share the stories of women who have heard the sound of the school bell and recognize that the sound has a different meaning for all of their students; some students hear the bell and find that their identity is "invisible," others hear the bell and find a place of welcome.   In uncovering these women's stories, I hope to find the points of rupture that allowed these women to realize an obligation to not only stop contributing to racism through commission and omission but also see the importance of utilizing their teaching practices in an effort to eradicate racism.

How the Bell Tolled for Me

I am a White elementary school teacher who has taught in four elementary schools, each occupying distinctly different locations on both a racial and class continuum. The first school where I taught was predominantly African-American and

primarily served students from a housing project near the school – a majority of the

students qualified for free or reduced lunch. From there I moved to a school that also

served students from government housing projects, but had a large share of comfortably

middle class students. Approximately forty percent of the students were African

American. Next on the scale was a school that served students who ranged from upper

middle class to mobile home parks. African American students accounted for

approximately thirty percent of the population, while a majority of the students who

qualified for free or reduced lunch were White. Finally, I moved to a position in a school

that served upper middle class students, with White students making up ninety percent of

the population and only two out of 810 students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Through my tenure at these various schools, I did not question my prevailing

attitudes. One attitude was that good teaching was good teaching, and my primary job

was to deliver content. I had intense frustration when behavioral issues got in the way,

and found that I worried less about discipline as I made each teaching move along the

racial and class scale. My comfort level grew as I gained experience; at no point did I

consider that my comfort level growing had any relation to the students whom I taught.

That is, as I moved along the continuum, I did not pay close attention to the fact that the

students whom I taught closely resembled both myself as well as the classrooms that I

had grown familiar with during my own schooling.

My doctoral program, though, caused me to pause and examine my experiences as

a White woman and teacher. The chief reason I began to examine my beliefs, pedagogy,

and praxis stemmed from my experience not as a member of the majority, but as a

member of the minority within my classes, as most of my classmates were African

American women. From my classmates, I began to see things through a very different lens than I had ever placed upon my eye. At first I disregarded their anger; surely "we" have overcome racism. Over and over again they expressed themselves, buttressing their comments with lived experiences. I heard their anger, yet I questioned its validity. Their anger became directed towards me, as my ignorance to their lived experience with racism became more and more apparent. I found myself in a place I had never been, reacting to their anger at first with anger of my own, but then by questioning who I was, what I had been taught, and all that I had ever experienced as a White woman. As my understanding of the world shattered, my classmates began the process of helping me recognize my identity as a White woman, showing me the pervasiveness of racism, and allowing me to understand that their life experiences allowed them to bring something entirely different to the table than I was able to bring. I began to recognize the wealth of knowledge that was inherent in their experiences, and I realized that I had oh, so much to learn.

As part of my self-examination, I realized that there are quite a few beliefs that I maintained along the way that are hurtful to all children regardless of race or ethnicity. As an example, I used to profess that I was quite colorblind – that the racial background of my students did not matter to me. I did not realize that this attitude constituted an act of erasure for some of my students. I also assumed that the "bag of tricks" that I had developed along the way was appropriate for all students. For instance, since I graduated from college during the height of the whole language movement, I was convinced that whole language was most appropriate for all of my students. I never considered that some of my pedagogical practices might be inappropriate for some of my students, and had certainly never considered the importance of pedagogical practices that are culturally

responsive[4] (Gay, 2000) to the home culture of my students. I had not paid attention to the lack of females and people of color in the curriculum that I presented, and had not realized how their absence communicated a hidden message of unworthiness to many of my students. This self-examination convicted me, and I realized that I had done a disservice to many of my students, past and present, female and male, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Through this self-examination I further realized I have lost the comfort I originally found in a setting that is both insular and isolationist. I have also realized that I am surrounded by adults who value this same insular and isolationist setting, and who are willing to pay exorbitant housing prices so that their children can experience this limited environment. I am concerned about the "bubble" that has been developed, and even more concerned that teachers who find comfort in this bubble are missing an important opportunity to educate all of our students when they fail to teach multiculturally.

The principles behind multicultural education have a lot to offer all of our students, including those students who are members of the dominant White culture. Unfortunately, my experience in four different elementary schools (three of which are in the suburbs of Metropolitan Atlanta) has shown that there are many White teachers on the elementary level who have a very cursory perspective of multicultural education. These teachers are the ones who feel that learning opportunities such as "holidays around the world," or international food festivals are appropriate and adequate means of teaching multiculturally. While these examples do represent a beginning, there is so much more to

---

[4] Culturally Responsive Pedagogy "acknowledges the reality of cultural differences and advocates the building of instruction and curriculum to address this reality. Whereas traditional schooling reflects the dominant middle class and White culture, this position advocates the development of a curriculum that

multicultural education than these superficial offerings allow. Authors such as Sleeter

(1996), Nieto (1999, 2000), Darling-Hammond (2002), Gay (2000, 2003), Ladson-

Billings (1994, 2003b), Banks (1995), hooks (1994), Howard (1999), and Tatum (1997)

all present ideas that show how teaching multiculturally can be implemented in ways

much deeper than the shallow treatment offered by many White elementary teachers.

 As I made the intellectual shift to understanding the importance of multicultural

education as envisioned by theorists like Banks (1995), Nieto (1999, 2000), and Sleeter

(1996), I reflected further upon my practices. Liberatory pedagogical practices began to

permeate my thinking and my praxis, and while I recognize that I still (and will always)

have a distance to travel, many principles behind multicultural education as it has been

envisioned inform my decisions as an educator. My students and I talk about race,

gender, and class; we look at issues from multiple perspectives; we bring culture into our

discussions and our activities; and we seek to recognize areas where we – even on the

elementary level – can make a difference. For me, moving towards teaching more

multiculturally took a life changing experience – a moment of rupture that allowed me to

recognize my identity as a White woman – that led to much introspection regarding my

teaching practices. My self-examination has led me to wonder: How do White women

become multicultural educators? Does it take a moment of rupture within one's identity

to facilitate this change?

<center>Alarm Bells</center>

 We find ourselves at a time of juncture, a place where the United States is

becoming increasingly more diverse while the teaching profession remains

---

reflects the home culture of the children in the school. It highlights racism and race relations as central to the discourse of empowerment" (Digiovanni & Liston, 2005, p. 129).

predominantly White. The Metropolitan Atlanta area is not the only area of the country

experiencing this demographic shift, but it is an area that is experiencing it at a time and

place where multicultural education has a rich legacy that can be imparted to our children

– what better place for this project than an area of the country that has both a history of

racial upheaval as well as a history of civil rights activism; an area of the United States

that is seen as a veritable Mecca for the growing African American middle class as well

as home to a growing Latino and Asian population (Gallagher & Lacy, 2003).

  Despite the time and place, a level of resistance remains to multicultural

education on the elementary level. This resistance often comes from White educators,

many of whom do not recognize the importance of multiculturalism within the classroom

because they see themselves without culture. Multicultural education practices become

for many a way of pacifying people of color, and are transformed into unthreatening

forays into learning about others. Sleeter (1996) further expounds why multicultural

education as it is frequently practiced seems homogeneous and unthreatening: "Schools,

as well as the colleges and job markets they serve, are controlled mainly by Whites, and

substantive reforms must have White support" (p. 8). Educators and theorists of color

have had difficulty expressing their understandings and beliefs about multicultural

education; Delpit (1995) notes that Whites tend not to listen to educators of color and

their understandings regarding teaching children of color, and consequently, the dialogue

that could emerge is often silenced before it begins. Discussions of race and racism are

met with blank stares, exhortations of "I don't see color" and denial from many White

teachers. As a result, many reforms moving towards multicultural education have been

couched with benign language, relying on more of a "human relations" approach to

multicultural education that focuses on sensitivity to race, rather than an approach that might be more substantive or radical.

Meanwhile, frustration mounts among White teachers in Georgia, leading to higher turnover in schools that are more racially diverse (Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2002). Alarm bells are sounding, and they ring vociferously as more Whites than students of color are referred for gifted programs (Ford & Harmon, 2001), discipline records reflect high numbers of students of color (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997), high percentages of non-White students can be found in both special education and remedial programs (Ladner & Hammons, 2001), more students of color than their White peers are retained, and more students of color than White students drop out of school (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2004, pp. 35 – 36). These alarm bells show that students of color are struggling to find themselves in the curriculum as well as to have their identity acknowledged, and have been ringing since the beginning of integration when students of color lost a sense of community and learned that schools were about obedience, not about the excitement that can be reaped through learning (hooks, 1994). Most White elementary teachers, myself included a few short years ago, turn a deaf ear to the alarm bells that draw attention to the need for and importance of multicultural education. The alarm bells are mysteriously silent for many, as White privilege masks the sound through the deaf acceptance of unexamined racist practices including standardized testing, tracking, and classroom procedures or practices that have "worked" with a majority of students for years. While I recognize that these educators mean well, White elementary educators unknowingly wear their White privilege into their classrooms, showing a tendency to remain comfortable with brief forays into

multicultural domains through taste tests and holidays, rather than implement

multicultural education that allows for cultural responsiveness and antiracist practices.

Further, White teachers, secure in their worldview, have a tendency to see their "diverse"

students as deficient and in need of remediation so that they can "achieve" at the levels of

their White peers. Through my project, however, I seek to find moments of rupture that

have allowed other White educators to learn what I have learned: our diverse students are

NOT deficient and in need of change. Rather, it is us, White women teachers who are

deficient of a more multicultural worldview that would enable us to be better teachers for

all of our students. For whom does the bell toll? It tolls for us, White women, asking us

to listen and learn from others the importance of identity and multicultural education.

CHAPTER TWO

NO ONE IS AN ISLAND: RESONANCE OF IDENTITY

Theoretical Framework

As I recognized my identity as a White female who happens to be an elementary educator, I realized that I have a standpoint, a place that allows me to interpret the world and how I fit in it. I easily claim the identity of feminist, as I readily see oppression as it relates to women. I had difficulty, though, in hearing the message within the alarm bells of my African American classmates – the message that racism is pervasive, and that their social location in the world allowed them to see it much better than I could mired in the "normalcy" of Whiteness.

As I experienced a rupture in my identity, and finally began to tune into the resonating clamor, I eventually realized that I had the same difficulty hearing others that many men have in hearing women who speak to oppression against women. I began to understand that we all play a role in fighting against oppression, and that fighting against one form without fighting against another actually perpetuates other forms of domination. As hooks (1984/2000) has so eloquently stated,

> Individuals who fight for the eradication of sexism without supporting struggles
> to end racism or classism undermine their own efforts. Individuals who fight for
> the eradication of racism or classism while supporting sexist oppression are
> helping to maintain cultural bias of all forms of group oppression. While they may
> initiate successful reforms, their efforts will not lead to revolutionary change.
> Their ambivalent relationship to oppression in general is a contradiction that must
> be resolved, or they will daily undermine their own radical work. (p. 40)

Because of the moment of rupture that occurred with my identity, I was able to recognize both my position and responsibility as a White woman in standing against all forms of oppression. I realized that I am obligated to listen to others, to start from their viewpoint in order to better understand mine. I found myself in the words of feminist standpoint theory.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

While feminist standpoint theory is generally attributed to Sandra Harding, others including Collins (1986), Haraway (1991), Hartsock (1998), Jaggar (1988), MacKinnon (1983), Narayan (2004) and Ruddick (1989) have all contributed to standpoint theory. As Harding notes, "standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power" (2004, p. 1). Feminist standpoint theory "focuses on the scientific and epistemological importance of the gap between understanding the world available if one starts from the lives of people in the exploited, oppressed, and dominated groups and the understanding provided by the dominant conceptual schemes" (Harding, 1991, p. 276).

Feminist standpoint theory allows for the recognition that knowledge is "situated," or socially constructed (Haraway, 1991). Research done from a feminist positioning allows for different knowledge than research done from "traditional" positions in that "traditional" positions reflect knowledge endemic to White males. While Harding and Haraway wrote from the perspective of science, their premise is accessible to other fields. Harding (2004) acknowledges that standpoint theory

> presented itself as a philosophy of science, an epistemology, and a methodology
> or method of research, appearing to conflate or even confuse fields standardly

kept distinct. It framed these disciplinary projects within a feminist social theory

and a political strategy, though standardly it presumed that these fields can and

should be kept immune from social and political elements. (p. 2)

Standpoint theories are able to provide the recognition that knowledge is socially

constructed because it moves "from *including* others' lives and thoughts in research and

scholarly projects to *starting from* their lives to ask research questions, develop

theoretical concepts, design research, collect data, and interpret findings" (emphasis in

original, Harding, 1991, p. 268). Knowledge, then, is not created exclusively from my

experiences. "What 'grounds' feminist standpoint theory is not women's experiences but

the view from women's lives….we can all learn about our own lives at the center of the

social order if we start our thought from the perspective of lives at the margin" (Harding,

1991, p. 269).

As a feminist, I bring to the table an understanding of oppression as it relates to

women. I consider feminism to be "the affirmation of all life forms without exploiting

any" (K.L. Hagan, personal communication, September 10, 2004). My feminist position

allows me to understand oppression, and to work towards its eradication because

oppression exploits, and does not affirm. This definition of feminism is not limited to

sexism, but encompasses all forms of oppression. This definition also enables me to use

feminist standpoint theory as the theoretical basis for my project, as I am seeking to find

the moment of rupture that allowed the development of the standpoints of White women

who utilize their pedagogical practices to fight the battle to eradicate oppression. Women

dominate elementary education; it is an interesting phenomenon that research within the

field is seldom done with a perspective that is inherently feminist.

As a feminist, woman, and as an elementary school teacher, I have had the opportunity to work with many students of varying class, race, and gender. My experiences through the different hats that I wear do not solely represent the knowledge that I have; my understanding of these experiences from both my perspective and perspectives other than my own informs my knowledge. My interpretation of my experiences within the elementary setting is informed by my understandings as a White woman, a woman who has experienced oppression. The transition that I made that allowed me to reassess my teaching multiculturally, however, occurred because I started from lives of "others" who are not like me in order to interpret my experiences

Harding draws attention to the importance of assessing our standpoint by starting from points that are away from our center of experience. Harding notes that she has not only learned about the standpoint of African Americans from African American thinkers, but she has "also learned certain things about European American experience, identity, and privilege which I previously took for granted simply as components either of human experience or of my purportedly individual experience" (Harding, 1991, p. 277). This same understanding applies to understandings learned from cultures other than our own. In fact, "it would appear to be not a luxury but a necessity for feminism that European Americans should use the analyses provided by women (and men) of Third World descent to actively seek to understand European American lives" (Harding, 1991, p. 282). Harding further explicates:

> I am to enter this discourse precisely as a European American woman….I am to take responsibility for my identity, my racial social location, by learning how I am connected to other Whites and to people of color; by learning what the

consequences of my beliefs and behaviors as a European American woman will

be. (Harding, 1991, p. 283)

As a White female elementary educator who utilizes feminist standpoint theory, I

recognize my identity within my racial social location. I am learning how I am connected

to others, and learning the consequences of my beliefs and behaviors as a European

American woman. My actions within and without the classroom impact others in ways

that I may not realize if I do not "*start from*" perspectives other than my own. This

realization allows me to gain, in Harding's words, a "more objective view" (Harding,

1991, p. 270) of the world, as my perspective is informed by others as well as my own.

Analyzing the stories of the women in my study through feminist standpoint theory will

allow me the opportunity to look for the point where they "*start[ed] from*" perspectives

other than their own, where they heard the tolling of the bell, and how they recognized

their identity within their racial social location.

Feminist standpoint theory could easily be the extent of the theoretical framework

for this project. One of the major criticisms of feminist theory, however, is that White

middle class women, who write much feminist theory, often forget the needs and interests

of people of color. By focusing my attention on the moment of rupture that allows White

women to recognize their identity, I run a risk of ignoring the needs and interests of

people of color, a risk of forgetting about the perspectives of others. Consequently, I take

a page from feminist standpoint theory itself and turn to two other theoretical

perspectives that "*start from*" the perspectives of people of color. I utilize both critical

race theory and the postpositivist realist theory of identity to inform my theoretical

framework and serve as reminders to continually center and recenter the perspectives of

those who are often marginalized. I realize that either critical race theory or postpositivist realism could serve as the theoretical framework for this project as well, yet by doing so, I recognize that feminist concerns can be pushed aside in interest of others. It is antithetical to my position as a feminist to have feminist concerns undercut; concerns of race, class, gender, sexuality are important in the definition I use as a feminist: "the affirmation of all life forms without exploiting any" (K.L. Hagan, personal communication, September 10, 2004). Significantly, my intent in having these theories inform feminist standpoint theory is not to appropriate the work of theorists of color, but instead to utilize their work to help me have a better understanding of my standpoint as a White female, as well as the standpoints of other White women who participate in my research. By fusing these three theoretical positions together, I recognize that these positions have similarities that allow them to work together within my theoretical framework, while at the same time strengthening it.

Critical Race Theory

One of the tenets of critical race theory is that racism is pervasive. This pervasiveness is what makes it so difficult to "see" as well as difficult to overcome. Another tenet is that there is little incentive to eradicate racism, as racism works to provide advantages for the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As a White woman researching how White women (including myself) become multicultural educators, ironically, I run the risk of contributing to racism rather than fighting for its eradication. Consequently, I include critical race theory as part of my theoretical framework to ensure that my efforts to undercut racism as a multicultural educator, as well as my efforts to find a point of rupture that allows other White women to become

multicultural educators, do not contribute to the status quo. I also utilize critical race

theory as a tool to recognize omissions and distortions (Ladson-Billings, 2003a) within

the understandings of White women educators as they work to become more

multicultural. While critical race theory puts race first, it also works towards elimination

of other forms of oppression (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). This desire for elimination of

oppression is consistent with my feminist understandings.

Elucidating the importance of critical race theory further, one thing that I need to

keep in mind with my research is "to what extent does [my] work contribute to or hinder

'the empowerment of oppressed people'?" (Alcoff, 1995, p. 251). That is, I "need to

consider the effects of [my] work to ensure that it does not reinforce existing race and

gender hierarchies" (Hall, 1999, ¶ 6). Additionally, the responsibility for fighting the

battle of racism should not rest entirely on the shoulders of people of color. As Howard

(2003) states:

> A … more pressing question should probe "Why people of color are expected to
>
> be the primary persons concerned with initiating a critical dialogue around issues
>
> of race and racism?" Or in other words, what responsibilities do White educators
>
> have in initiating discussions concerned with interrogating race and racism? (p.
>
> 38)

Without the perspectives of people of color informing the standpoint of White

women, I believe it would be difficult for White women to have a rupture in their

identity. When the moment of rupture occurs which allows White identity to emerge, the

tenets of critical race theory become obvious and not obfuscated. Whether one examines

things like the treatment of different race customers in stores, the representation of people

of color by the media, or the percentages of students of color compared to White students in special education and gifted programs, racism is indeed pervasive. The difficulty for many White people to see the extent that racism pollutes our world is not lost on people of color, however, nor on those, as standpoint theory notes, who have moved "from *including* others' lives and thoughts in research and scholarly projects to *starting from* their lives to ask research questions, develop theoretical concepts, design research, collect data, and interpret findings" (emphasis in original, Harding, 1991, p. 268). That is, when Whites *start from* the lives of people of color, the ability to understand racism is much more evident than when Whites do not. As such, my project maintains its feminist standpoint, yet is informed by critical race theory, as it seeks to see how White female elementary educators have utilized perspectives other than their own in an effort to become multicultural educators.

Postpositivist Realist Theory of Identity

Feminist standpoint theory stresses the importance of starting from a perspective other than our own. A postpositivist realist theory of identity gives me that opportunity, as it has its roots in feminist standpoint theory, yet is decidedly based in the perspectives of theorists of color (Hames-Garcia, 2000; Mohanty, 2000; Moya, 2000, 2002).

Postpositivist realism is the result of theorists recognizing how valuable the concept of identity can be to marginalized groups, as seen in the work of Anzaldua (1999), Moraga (1983), Moya (2000), and Mohanty (1997). One of the key discussions within postpositivist realism is how to utilize the concept of identity, an essentialist position, given the criticism iterated by the postmodern perspective. From an essentialist perspective, "identity politics [seem] to offer considerable agency to members of

oppressed groups" (Henze, 2000, p. 236). The postmodern position on identity, however, is that identity is fluid; one cannot claim identity if it is always changing (Butler, 1999). The conflict arises in the sense that one cannot have, or for that matter, utilize, identity for political agency if one subscribes to the postmodern perspective on identity. If one looks at how power is distributed unequally in our world, however, it becomes near impossible to set aside identity politics if one is a person of color, a woman, or homosexual. This unequal power distribution occurs in direct relation to one's identity (Perez, 1993).

A postpositivist realist theory of identity bridges this gap, allowing one to employ political agency, while acknowledging multiplicity within identity (Henze, 2000). Moya (2000) places this understanding in the essentialist and postmodern continuum by acknowledging that identities are neither fixed nor random. Identity, then, can change as a result of our social locations. Our identity within these social locations allows us to make truth claims:

> What makes them specifically *truth* claims is that I understand them to be true, and I cannot abandon them until I have an experience that causes me to rethink my position, or until someone, using argumentation and presenting evidence, persuades me that I have been partially or completely in error. (emphasis in original, Moya, 2002, p. 96)

Further, postpositivist realism allows us to acknowledge that social categories have a role in identity, but do not reduce people to that social category (Moya, 2000). Our identities are both socially constructed and "real." Ontologically and epistemologically, then, we make sense of our experiences and the world through our

identities, even though they are theoretical constructions. "It is in this sense that they are valuable, and their epistemic status should be taken very seriously" (Mohanty, 2000, p. 43). Thus, knowledge about the world and the realities that are present, even if they are socially constructed, like racism, can be obtained through this theory of identity. Postpositivist realism acknowledges that identity has importance, and allows one to have "a nonessentialist way to ground [her identity]" (Moya, 2000, p. 99).

Postpositivist realism relies on two important precepts. The first is epistemic privilege, defined by Moya (2000) as "a special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) operate to sustain matrices of power" (pp. 80-81). The second is that of theory mediated experience, which is also well explained by Moya (2000):

> The meanings we give our experiences are inescapably conditioned by the ideologies and "theories" through which we view the world. But the crucial claim in my argument is not that experience is theoretically mediated but rather that experience *in its mediated form* contains a "cognitive component" through which we can gain access to knowledge of the world. (emphasis in original, p. 81)

These epistemological points can be stated a bit differently, and this helps to show the tension between the two. "Postpositivist realism understands the production of knowledge as primarily a collective enterprise, as opposed to the presumptions of epistemic privilege, which are marked by an inherent individuality" (MacDonald, 2002, p. 125). That is, while we rely on individual epistemic privilege, knowledge does not grow unless there is a social aspect to foster that growth. "Knowledge is not produced simply by understanding social relations, but by understanding experiences in terms of

social relations" (Henze, 2000, p. 235). Regardless, postpositivist realism "assumes that truth exists and that I can make successive approximations toward it" (Moya, 2002, pp. 96-97).

One of the reasons I bring postpositivist realism into my theoretical framework is because of its potential in bridging postmodern and essentialist thought as a means toward political agency. I also bring the postpositivist realist theory of identity into my framework because I recognize that my identity as a White woman has influenced how I interpret my experiences. As Mohanty (2000) states, "our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences. Identities are theoretical constructions that enable us to read the world in specific ways" (p. 43). Consequently,

> The possibility of interpreting our world accurately depends fundamentally on our coming to know what it would take to change it, on our identifying the central relations of power and privilege that sustain it and make the world what it is. And we learn to identify these relations through our various attempts to change the world, not merely to contemplate it as it is. (Mohanty, 2000, p. 41)

Women who have experienced a rupture in their identity learn to recognize their relation to power. As a White person, I recognize that I have privileges, such as not having to prove my intelligence or financial stability. As a woman, however, I recognize that the privileges that I have because of my race are also overshadowed by male privilege, such as the assumption of authority that is automatically given to men in boardrooms and households. Knowing one's relationship to power influences one's interpretations.

Yet another important element of the postpositivist realist theory of identity is that those who are oppressed have epistemic privilege, and that others may draw from a

collective knowledge to better understand their position in the world (Henze, 2000; Mohanty, 2000; Moya, 2002). Inherent in this social context of knowledge is "the possibility and necessity of transcultural understandings and evaluations" (Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 127). The use of postpositivist realism to inform feminist standpoint theory in my research brings the acknowledgement that White women have the ability to access the epistemic privileges of others who are oppressed, "open[ing] up the possibility that our own epistemic privilege is partial, shaped by our social location" (Mohanty, 2000, p. 58). It further recognizes "the possibility of more and less objective knowledge of universal human needs and interests, like the need for self-determination and freedom from gender, racial, and economic slavery, or the interest in being a whole and multiple self" (Hames-Garcia, 2000, p. 127).

Euphony Between These Three Positions

One of the areas of mutual support within these theoretical positions is that each stresses the importance of looking at a different perspective other than that provided by dominant discourse (Harding, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2003a; Moya, 2000). The feminist perspective and the perspectives of people of color are moved from the margin to the center, an important tenet when working to eradicate oppression of any kind. By moving these perspectives from the margin to the center, we allow for truth, knowledge, and reality to be seen differently. This movement gives us reason for action, regardless of our social location:

> When we acknowledge that the experiences of victims might be repositories of valuable knowledge, and thus allow that they have epistemic privilege, we are not thereby reduced to sentimental silence. Entailed in our acknowledgement is the

> need to pay attention to the way our social locations facilitate or inhibit
> knowledge by predisposing us to register and interpret information in certain
> ways. Our relation to social power produces forms of blindness just as it enables
> degrees of lucidity. (Mohanty, 2000, pp. 59 – 60)

Indeed, elements of feminist standpoint theory, critical race theory, and postpositivist realism are easily ascertained from the above quote. We see the importance of "*starting from*" another perspective; we see that racism (as well as other forms of oppression) is pervasive, yet difficult for some to perceive; and we see that social location impacts epistemic privilege.

Each theoretical position also expresses the importance of liberatory knowledge. As Harding (1991) states,

> the logic of standpoint theory requires that the subject of liberatory feminist
> knowledge must also be the subject of every other liberatory knowledge
> project….feminism will have to grasp how gender, race, class, and sexuality are
> used to construct one another. (p. 285)

Each of these positions, then, recognizes the interconnectedness of these social constructs and knowledge upon oppression (Harding, 1991; Howard, 2003; Moya 2000).

In addition, each of these theoretical positions calls for activism of some kind (Ladson-Billings, 2003a; Hames-Garcia, 2000; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998). These theoretical positions are not static; they recognize that if one holds these positions, standing still is antithetical to the fight against oppression.

Indeed, in this fight against oppression, we must take truth and reality as we understand it and use it to affect social change, recognizing that we may be wrong in our

understandings, or not completely informed by other perspectives. As Moya (2002) makes clear:

> I acknowledge that I have no immediate access to truth and that, as a result, my ideas are subject to mystification and error. As such, I am required (if I care very much about truth at all) to consider alternative conceptions of what the truth is. I further realize that considering alternative versions of the truth may make me profoundly uncomfortable. I may - more precisely, WILL - have to question the very foundation of my being: my sense of my self, my understanding of what is or is not beautiful, what is or is not good. I will have to reevaluate all that I hold dear, everything that makes life meaningful. Indeed, I will have to ask whether human life has any meaning at all. (p. 97)

Applying this complex theoretical framework to my own experiences, I have had the following suspicion: When a White female elementary educator experiences a rupture in her identity, and realizes her identity as a White female, she realizes that her identity brings with it both political and epistemological significance. Only then is she is in a place to recognize the importance of being a multicultural educator. Not until then. The standpoints of others that inform her standpoint – realizing that those others who are often the ones who have been marginalized have epistemic privilege and that their knowledge and realities ought to inform her knowledge and reality (not to mention the learning that takes place in her classroom) – *that* is when a White female's conception of truth changes.

Critical race theory is visible in this understanding, too. When a White female's conception of truth changes regarding her social location, it is then that she sees that

racism is pervasive, and is not aberrational – quite an unsettling "realization." As a White person, I did not "see" how pervasive racism is, nor did I realize it was present in my educational practices. Once I allowed other standpoints to have epistemic value and worth in my understandings of the world and how it operated, it was only then that I was able to "see" dysconscious racism (despite the fact that I have been mired in it for a long time). I realized as well the truth in the following statement made by Christine Sleeter (1996):

> White people would like to be passive non-racists: "good" whites who are not contributing to racism, but who also are not changing our own lives to try to dismantle it. This is a position that is impossible to take, however. Whites benefit from white supremacy every day, and to do nothing is to accept the benefits, even if we are not aware of them. (p. 26)

Sleeter also reminds me that in my awareness, I have two choices. I can continue to learn and work to counter oppression, or I can choose not to. By choosing not to, though, my "own personal baggage becomes very political, because we close our ranks to protect ourselves and our collective privileges" (p. 29). Yet this awareness cycles back on itself; when I choose to counter oppression, I have to be careful not to foster oppression. This is not an easy task. The rupture in identity that occurs is not without pain. As Harding (1991) states:

> If these processes are not painful, I am probably not doing them right. After all, it can't be entirely a pleasure to discover the unintentionally racist assumptions that have guided so many of my thoughts and practices – especially at those moments when I was trying to enact a piece of antiracist business. (p. 293)

Indeed, by combining the theoretical principles found within feminist standpoint theory, critical race theory, and postpositivist realist theory of identity, I have a theoretical framework that allows me to better understand White female elementary educators who have made strides to become multicultural educators. Moya (2002) elucidates this further:

Identities are politically and epistemologically significant because they reveal the links between individuals and groups and central organizing principles of the society. This is why theorizing the process of identity formation can provide a critical perspective from which cultural critics can disclose the complicated workings of ideology and oppression. (p. 99)

Potential Cacophony

There are moments of cacophony that occur because of combining these three frameworks. The chief difference between standpoint theory and postpositivist realist theories of identity is that feminist standpoint theory assumes one standpoint; one's standpoint may be informed by a multiplicity of perspectives (that is, a standpoint is informed by White, African American, Chicana, female, etc… perspectives), but the standpoint is singular (Harding, 1991). Postpositivist realism assumes that one can be informed by multiple positions, multiple perspectives, and hence, multiple standpoints at the same time (Mohanty, 2000; Moya, 2000). Postpositivist realism, then, highlights the need for not just starting from "the margin" but multiple marginalities and continually recentering the new margin – it puts standpoint theory into a continual cycle.

Related to this, postpositivist realism and critical race theory refuse to accept social categories as fixed (Marx, 2004; Moya, 2000); while standpoint theory does not

specifically state that social categories are fixed, it does not accept identity as a social

construction that is completely fluid. Again, the multiple positions, and therefore,

multiple standpoints denote the fluidity in identity. A standpoint is not totally rigid and

can change, however, based on knowledge gained from others and from experiences. I

acknowledge this tension in my theoretical framework, and utilize this tension to make

sure that my standpoint is not static. As I learn from the White women who participate in

my project, I will continually reassess my standpoint – the cyclical aspect of this tension

is one of my main reasons for utilizing postpositivist realism to inform feminist

standpoint theory.

A further dissonance that emerges by combining these three theoretical

perspectives is that of interest convergence (Ladson-Billings, 2003b). By utilizing tenets

of critical race theory and postpositivist realism, a possible conflict arises in that my

theoretical framework may actually serve to advance the interest of Whites rather than

those who are oppressed. My intent here is quite the opposite. By utilizing tenets of

critical race theory and postpositivist realism, my hope is that my feminist perspective

does not brush concerns of people of color aside, but includes them in my perspective as

well.

Yet another issue of concern is the tension that exists between multiculturalism

and feminism (Ladson-Billings, 2003b), and consequently any project that utilizes

feminist standpoint theory for multiculturalism. When one looks at the immense

interconnectedness of oppression, it is sometimes difficult to tell which concern ought

take precedence in the fight to eradicate oppression. "Although these varied and multiple

identity categories do not compete as they are embodied in single individuals,…

politically the categories are pitted against each other and compete for primacy on academic and policy agendas" (Ladson-Billings, 2003b). Again, this is a difficult tension to address. Moya (2002) provides a starting point, though, in addressing this dissonance between identities:

> Cross-cultural engagement and even conflict is not seen as something to be avoided, but rather as something that is absolutely necessary for epistemic and moral growth. Unless we engage with other belief systems seriously enough to be forced to call into question our own views and beliefs, such growth will cease to occur. (p. 171)

Based on this thought, then, I should welcome opportunities that provide disharmony between identities within my dissertation.

A further criticism lies in the claim that my theoretical framework could be considered essentialist in nature, particularly with its reliance on feminism and the construct of identity. Ironically, an essentialist would not agree. This theoretical framework asserts that individual identity and experience is valued. As Henze (2000) notes, an essentialist position calls for the privileging of "common experiences of group members" (p. 232). A postmodern perspective would be that "the progressive political activist's or theorist's task…should be to undermine or 'subvert' identities in order to destabilize the normalizing forces that bring them into being" (Moya, 2000, p. 7) rather than to utilize identity as a means of making sense of the world and our role within it. This dialectical tension is indeed why postpositivist realism informs my theoretical framework; it provides a theoretical position that places itself in the continuum between essentialism and postmodernism, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in both

positions, while maintaining the importance of utilizing identity for political agency (Mohanty, 2000; Moya, 2000).

In her recent anthology about feminist standpoint theory, Harding (2004) addresses many criticisms of feminist standpoint theory. These criticisms include how controversial it is, often for reasons like what I just delineated above in the understanding or postpositivist realism.

> In spite of continuing criticisms, [feminist standpoint theory] just doesn't go away….in the last few years interest in it has surged ahead in dozens and dozens of articles, explaining it again to new audiences, puzzling anew over the issues it raises, or exerting considerable effort to challenge its usefulness in any context at all. (Harding, 2004, p. 3)

I actually consider this a strength of standpoint theory, rather than a criticism. The controversial nature of it is what allows for growth, for the dialectical tension that emerges from conflicting ideas. This study reflects this dialectic in its understandings of the standpoints of the White female educators who were participants. From the moment of discord within identity, these women recognize that they are not islands unto themselves. The tolling of the bells resonates within them, allowing them to reflect upon their timbre, and adjust their pitch to better work multiculturally.

Literature Review

There are three aspects that are important to review within the literature for a study of White female educators who are becoming multicultural educators. These are understandings about multicultural education, the voices of multicultural advocates, and the progression of these voices to understandings about White identity.

Multicultural Education: Long Sounding Clanging

The multicultural education alarm bell that awoke me has been clanging for many

years. Multicultural education within the United States finds its roots in the purposes

inherent behind schooling in this country from its inception. The purpose of the common

school was to invoke a "common" grounding of citizenship and education among the

people of this country. As Banks (2001) discusses, the Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture

established itself as dominant throughout United States institutions, including the school,

in part as a reaction to the influx of immigrants. Educational leaders like Ellwood

Patterson Cubberley in 1909 declared that one of the tasks of the common school was to

assimilate immigrants "as part of our American race, and to implant in their

children…the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular

government" (quoted in Banks, 2001, p. 21). This desire is translated into the beginning

of a "nativism" movement in the United States that embedded the idea of

"Americanization" within the curriculum (Banks, 2001). Reacting to this assimilationist

tendency inherent in the structure of common schools, parochial schools as well as some

foreign language schools were established during the 1800s serving in some ways as

precursors to the multicultural education movement (Grant & Gomez, 2001).

Banks (2001) notes that there were some cultural pluralists during the early

twentieth century, "such as Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, and Julius Drachsler,

[who] defended the immigrants' rights, stating that cultural democracy should exist in a

democratic nation" (p. 36). These arguments influenced few, and schools (as well as

other institutions) continued assimilationist approaches through the World Wars. It was

during this time, too, that the "melting pot" metaphor for the United States came into vogue.

Multicultural education movements truly came to life and were fueled by the civil rights movement of the 1960s. As Webster (1997) notes the "1970s 'culturalist' criticisms of schooling, and ethnic revivalism, also of the mid-1970s" spurred multiculturalism (p. 15). An increase in immigration from Latin America and Asia during the latter portion of the twentieth century also stimulated multicultural education movements (Grant & Gomez, 2001).

Important to realize in this discussion is that the need for multicultural education has been recognized, at least by some, for many years. Also important to realize is a movement that calls for assimilation and acculturation has been very strong throughout the history of schools in the United States, and is still evident in the voices of parents and community members who are comfortable with the status quo and are uncomfortable with educational practices that call for social change. "Opponents of multiculturalism …accurately reflect important ingredients of our educational past; this helps explain their fervor and their strength" (Grant & Gomez, 2001, p. 27). In many ways, the tension between those who desire to assimilate "others" in the United States to Anglo-Saxon cultural norms and those who desire to generate new cultural norms has existed since the inception of "common schools."

Principles and Forms of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has many guises in this country. Inherent in the theoretical underpinnings of multicultural education are certain understandings. Banks (2001) sets forth the notion that multicultural education is multifaceted and includes the

dimensions of "content integration," "the knowledge construction process," "prejudice reduction," "an equity pedagogy," and "an empowering school culture and social structure" (p. 4). Sleeter's (1996) vision sees multicultural education as a form of social reconstruction, teaching "directly about political and economic oppression and discrimination, and prepar[ing] young people to use social action skills" (p. 7). Nieto (2000) does a beautiful job of both defining and providing a vision for multicultural education in her definition that incorporates elements of both Banks' and Sleeter's visions:

> Multicultural education … challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the schools' curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice. (p. 305)

The translation of these principles, however, is a different matter. Multiple approaches to multicultural education can be found in our schools. One of these approaches has been deemed the *Tourist Approach*, which is ironic, because it does not reflect any of the principles of multicultural education as it has been defined (Aldridge, Calhoun & Aman, 2000; Derman-Sparks, 1993). The tourist approach occurs when

multicultural education is presented as what one might find if they were going on vacation when learning about a particular culture. Taste tests, holiday customs, ceremonial dress – all of these become central to instruction, serve to reinforce the "normalcy" of American experience, and highlight diversity as a novelty while avoiding what life is like in the culture being studied on a daily basis (Moore & Derman-Sparks, 2003). Cultures do not saturate the curriculum; rather, they are examined periodically throughout the year, particularly around holidays such as Thanksgiving, or Cinco de Mayo. Several theorists have termed this type of classroom as the "culturally assaultive classroom" (Clark & Dewolf, 1992) as it perpetuates stereotypes and biases.

Moving beyond the tourist approach, there are five other approaches, as delineated by Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant (2003), which reflect principles of multicultural education in that they specifically focus on educational practices in regards to race, gender, language, culture, class and disability. One of these is *Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different*. Those who utilize this approach focus on fixing deficiencies of students in their charge, and consider mainstream society as the norm. The teacher's role in this approach is to raise the achievement of students, typically through education programs that are deemed culturally compatible, and consequently assimilate their students into mainstream culture. Criticisms of this approach include that it does not "address structural barriers to economic access" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 6), as well as the obvious goal of assimilation.

A second approach to multicultural education is the *Human Relations Approach*. This approach focuses on helping students learn that we are the same because we are different. A major focus of this approach is to teach tolerance and respect for others, as

well as to develop positive self-concept among students. Multicultural education activists

do not endorse this approach as it is akin to treating the symptoms and not the disease;

this approach hopes to create positive school experiences for students, while avoiding

addressing racism itself. Ironically, this approach is the one with which most White

teachers are comfortable (Sleeter, 1996).

Single-Group Studies is yet another approach to multicultural education. This

approach is appropriate for older students, as it explores cultural groups independently

with an interest in how oppression has affected the group historically and in present day.

This approach is inherently political, and can often be found on college campuses through

Women's Studies, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, and the like.

A fourth approach is the *Multicultural Education Approach*. This method seeks

to completely restructure schooling, not just curriculum, so that it models "the ideal

pluralistic and equal society" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 6). This approach involves a change in

the school culture, an infusion of culture in content understandings, antiracist

understandings, as well as pedagogical changes that facilitate "academic achievement of

students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups" (Banks, 2001, p. 13).

Multiple perspectives are represented throughout the curriculum, so that all students see

themselves in the curriculum, while learning about others through a variety of methods.

With the use of this approach, the school climate should be one that is welcoming and

respectful.

The last approach delineated by Sleeter and Grant (2003) is *Education that is*

Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist. This approach "teaches directly about

political and economic oppression and discrimination, and prepares young people to use

social action skills" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 7). This approach invokes the principles of the
Multicultural Education Approach while encouraging students to recognize behavior that
is unfair, and look for ways to change it. Thus, this approach focuses on teaching
students to find ways to improve society, to act politically, and to develop a spirit of
social justice.

There are many criticisms about multicultural education, yet this is frustrating to
many theorists and advocates. There is a recognition in the field that what passes for
multicultural education in mainstream practices does not always represent the intent of
multicultural education thought. Banks has remarked "critics have chosen some of the
worst practices that are masquerading as multicultural education and defined these
practices as multicultural education" (quoted in Sleeter, 1996, p. 7). Discussion and
criticism of multicultural education should also be impacted by knowing which approach
is being criticized (Sleeter, 1996). Additionally, "one must distinguish between an
approach as formulated by its main theorists, and superficial applications of it that one
often finds in schools as well as the literature" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 7). The problem in the
implementation of the principles of multicultural education seems to partially lie in the
view that multicultural education is primarily a "curriculum reform that involves
changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about ethnic groups, women,
and other cultural groups" (Banks, 2001, p. 3). This limited view of multicultural
education is a direct result of the emphasis on curriculum reform when the multicultural
education movement took hold in the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 2001). As Nieto (1999)
asserts, though, it is easier to address and focus on curriculum reform through curriculum
integration than it is "to dismantle tracking or challenge an entrenched racist ideology"

(p. 163). Multicultural education, though, is much more than curriculum reform. It also involves a change in the school culture, an infusion of culture in content understandings, antiracist understandings, as well as pedagogical changes that facilitate "academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups" (Banks, 2001, p. 13).

Voices of Multicultural Advocates

None of these approaches would exist without the work of theorists and advocates to expound their ideas regarding the importance of multicultural education. There is a distinct difference in the voices, though, based on racial, gender, and social location. Multicultural education advocates who are people of color, such as James Banks (1995, 2001), Geneva Gay (2000), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2003a), Lisa Delpit (1995), or Sonia Nieto (1999, 2000) speak from perspectives outside the dominant discourse. As such, they have the ability to offer a critique of the racial hegemony that exists within schools because they have a view from the margin. Racism within educational practices is evident because of their identity and location; curriculum and pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive and antiracist become a natural outgrowth of their work.

White multicultural antiracist advocates and educators enter the field differently precisely because of their location within the dominant discourse. Some advocates are autobiographical. Vivian Paley (1979/2000) discusses her experiences as a kindergarten teacher, and how she reflected upon the intersections of race among her students and herself. Julie Landsman (2001) follows a similar course, discussing her experiences as an alternative education teacher, talking candidly about race, racism, and mistakes and successes she has made with her students. Mab Segrest (1994), talks frankly about her

experiences growing up in Alabama during the civil rights movement and her work as an activist in North Carolina, juxtaposing the many faces of oppression in various locations. Other advocates include their stories of racial awakening (Howard, 1999; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1996) to buttress their ideas towards multicultural education; their stories are not the focus of their work, but serve to highlight how they became aware of the need for an understanding of Whiteness as part of their identity in order to be better educators for all students. As McIntyre (1997) notes,

> Both educators of color, and white educators, may work simultaneously to challenge existing educational policies and practices that discriminate against certain racial and ethnic groups under the umbrella of multicultural education, but this challenge is grounded in different life experiences. (p. 12)

These life experiences help to formulate a person's identity, as identity is both socially constructed and real (Moya, 2000). Recognition of White identity, then, seems to be a common element among Whites who work against racism, whether it be through their educational practices, the literature they produce, or other activities with which they are involved. As such, White identity is an important focus for this review.

White Identity

White identity is in some ways a new construct to be examined in academic circles. As early as the 1980s, however, Ruth Frankenberg (1993) was researching how race shapes White women's lives. As Frankenberg (1993) makes clear, Whiteness has three linked dimensions:

> First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint," a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and

at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually

unmarked and unnamed. (p. 1)

Frankenberg's work points out that many Whites perceive that "race is not an

issue," yet it continues to shape our lives and how we act. Ironically, to be White is

considered "normal" and "neutral" (Powell, 1996); race is believed to be irrelevant to

identity. This understanding about race causes many Whites to believe that race should

be irrelevant to others as well, and that one should act as if they are colorblind (Howard,

1999; Powell, 1996). Race and racism are things that happen "out there," and have little

to do with the everyday life of people who are White. Consequently, many Whites have

the impression that there is little need to learn about race, or people of color. These

feelings frequently cause many Whites to feel without culture, race, or ethnicity (Howard,

1999). As Tatum (1997) notes,

> There is a lot of silence about race in White communities, and as a consequence
>
> Whites tend to think of racial identity as something other people have, not
>
> something that is salient for them. But when, for whatever reason, the silence is
>
> broken, a process of racial identity development for Whites begins to unfold. (p.
>
> 94)

White racial identity is created and recreated when people experience rupture and

tension due to social situations (Minh-Ha, 1996). An awareness of Whiteness usually

occurs through interactions with people of color where they have been challenged to

consider their racial and social location (Eichstedt, 2001). Such a challenge causes a

sense of loss, or confusion, a sense of not knowing what is good or bad, a realization that

what was once thought to be true may not be (Pratt, 1984; Frye, 1992).

Such ruptures in identity play a role in various models of White racial identity that have been developed (Carney and Kahn, 1984; Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1990; Ganter, 1977; Ponterotto, 1988). While these models have different names for stages of identity development, processes are similar in each. A White person moves along a continuum as she is confronted with the meaning of Whiteness in today's society. This continuum ranges from complete oblivion to the meaning of Whiteness to antiracist behaviors that causes one to work against oppression and act in a pluralistic manner.

As a White person develops White identity, she also becomes more aware of the privileges that she has strictly because she is White (Katz, 1978; Kivel, 2002; McIntosh, 1988/2003; Pharr, 1996). White privilege is well explained by Alcoff (2000), who states that "the core of White privilege is the ability to consume anything, anyone, anywhere" (p. 275). Peggy McIntosh's work on White privilege was considered groundbreaking, as she demonstrated that because so much of what Whites are able to do is considered normal, it is difficult to recognize oppressive behavior when we are enacting it. She highlights as well that these ideas are counter to what we have been taught is racism. For many Whites, racism manifests itself in overt ways; the dysconscious and systemic institutional and cultural racism that exists hides itself in what appears to be normal. From the ability to purchase skin toned band-aids to seeing oneself represented in the school curriculum, White privilege is pervasive (McIntosh, 1988/2003).

Yet with White privilege, many Whites also feel a sense of entitlement. There remains a belief that if one works hard, one deserves to be compensated, and that people of color are taking away privileges that rightfully belong to Whites (Kivel, 2002; McIntosh, 1988/2003; Tatum, 1997). In examining the continuing frustration of people

of color, however, one finds that hard work does not always pay off in areas such as jobs, housing, or education. When one recognizes that White privilege benefits some, and not others, it wreaks havoc on the notion that many Whites have that meritocracy is what occurs when race is not a factor (Landsman, 2001).

As Whites become more aware of how race impacts identity, and how privileges exist for some and not others because of racial location, some experience White guilt. This, however, changes the focus from the real issue at hand:

> Born into a racist society, we find ourselves thrown into a situation – caught up in a tangle of racial meanings that are not originally of our own making. This thrownness is part of what frustrates well-meaning whites: we did not *choose* to be born white in a racist society. We do not now wish to choose whiteness or racism, but there they are, part of our world; so we try to distance ourselves from them, to show that we would unchoose them if we could. White guilt mourns genocide, slavery, land theft, lynchings, and broken promises as part of a past that can no longer be changed – and in so doing seeks to return to imagined innocence. Since the past cannot be changed, we insist on being allowed to feel good about ourselves. Yet this is a solution only if the *problem* is white helplessness rather than racism. Taking on the alleviation of white guilt as an antiracist project keeps whiteness at the center of antiracism. (Thomson, 2003, pp. 23-24)

White guilt, then, turns the issue away from racism and recenters the normalcy of Whiteness. Others, in an attempt to move away from White guilt, strive to identify with the "racial other." This may constitute a fantasy of personal redemption. Such actions

may be a new form of White privilege (Roman, 1997). As Ellsworth (1997) states, such is one of the double binds of Whiteness.

Inherent in discussions of White identity is that racism is a problem for all, not just people of color. Whites have to develop awareness of their race, understand White privilege, and work against racism out of this awareness (McIntyre, 1997). This idea is summed up well by Lawrence and Bunche (1996):

Only when white persons fully examine their whiteness and recognize their

position in the racial order can they go beyond positions of assumed superiority

and work towards effective change by opposing institutional and cultural racism.

(p. 532)

In other words, Whiteness, which is a social construct, affords those who are White privileges whether they ask for them or not. White identity is present for all who are a member of the White race, yet development of an antiracist White identity hinges upon social challenges that cause a rupture within one's understanding of self and location and forces an examining of Whiteness.

A natural extension of developing an antiracist White identity is to extend the scholarship on White identity into teacher education as a means to change race relations and work against racism (McCarthy, 2003). Consequently, there is a growing body of literature regarding teaching practices informed by developing understandings about White racial identity and race (Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; McIntyre, 1997; Roman, 1993; Sleeter, 1993, 1995a, 1995b; Tatum, 1997).

Resonance of Identity

The theoretical framework of this study, feminist standpoint theory informed by critical race theory and a postpositivist realist theory of identity, highlights the importance one's identity plays in the development of one's standpoint. Multicultural education, and the players who enact it, must also recognize the role of identity inherent with any practice that has as its goal eliminating oppression. We are not islands unto ourselves; our identities help us develop our standpoint, and we learn about our identities because of our interactions with others, particularly when others have different standpoints, identities, and racial and social locations.

CHAPTER THREE

PIECES OF THE CONTINENT: METHODOLOGICAL REVERBERATIONS

As school settings become more diverse, and as the teaching force remains predominantly White and female on the elementary level, both nationwide and in the state of Georgia, there remains a need for education that is more multicultural. Yet many White educators on the elementary level see multicultural education as an additive component to the curriculum, rather than an integral part of the curriculum that is infused on a daily basis. With both Sleeter (in Miner and Peterson, 2001) and Howard (1999) attesting to the difficulty for White educators to make a mental shift to the precepts of multicultural education because of the "normalcy" of Whiteness, I find myself with the following question: *How do White women become multicultural educators?* It is my suspicion that it takes a moment of rupture within one's identity to lead White women to recognize their racial and social location within the world. This research project seeks to learn how three White women recognized the need to become multicultural.

Where the Bell Tolls

This study took place in the Metropolitan Atlanta area, a ten county area of the country that is experiencing tremendous growth in diversity, as many African Americans consider the region to be welcoming to them, and Latino and Asian populations are beginning to flourish (Gallagher & Lacy, 2003). Despite this growth in diverse populations, the teaching force on the elementary level remains primarily female and White, in keeping with nationwide trends.

The teachers who participated work in one county found in the south Metropolitan Atlanta area.[5] This county has received continual recognition in the state for maintaining test scores that are among the highest in the state. ESOL programs have become more and more important in this district, as students this district serves now speak over 85 different languages. The participants themselves work in three different elementary schools within the system; while each participant's school serves a different socioeconomic status range, two of the schools serve predominantly White students. One participant's school, however, has experienced a demographic shift over the past ten years and serves more African American students than any other racial category.

<div align="center">Finding Those Who Hear the Bell</div>

A multi-stepped process was utilized to select participants. The first criterion was that the teachers selected had to work in public elementary schools within the ten county Metropolitan Atlanta area. In order to determine potential participants, experts in teaching English to speakers of other languages, migrant education, and cultural diversity training were contacted at the Georgia Department of Education. The Regional Education Service Agencies for the Metropolitan Atlanta area were also contacted. These sources were asked to identify individual teachers who have a reputation for meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations. Students in the doctoral program in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern who are familiar with multicultural education precepts were also asked if they knew of any potential participants for this study.

Twelve names were acquired from this initial process from three different school systems in the Metropolitan Atlanta area. These systems are not located next to each

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[5] The original intent of this study was to find people in various school systems within the Atlanta area. Reasons why participants became limited are discussed in the next section.

other, and represent three distinct areas within Metropolitan Atlanta, each with growing

populations of people of color. Once names of potential participants were known, a letter

seeking permission to perform the study was sent to the county school superintendent of

each participant (See Appendix A). Two counties denied permission to perform the study

within their school system, which eliminated five potential participants. Only one

superintendent responded positively, and a letter seeking permission was sent to the

principal of each potential participant (See Appendix B). Once all permission was

garnered, each recommended teacher was contacted by the researcher via whatever

method of contact was given – address, email, or phone. These teachers were sent the

White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (WRIAS)[6], a fifty question Likert scale instrument

developed by Janet Helms and Robert Carter (1990), a letter explaining the study and

procuring informed consent, as well as a general questionnaire (See Appendices C and

D). Return of these to the researcher constituted permission to be considered for the

study. Potential participants were also informed that participating in the study was

completely voluntary.

A key part of the screening process was the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale

(WRIAS), a scale created by Janet Helms and Robert Carter that is the result of Janet

Helms' theory of White racial identity development (1990).[7] Helms (1995) posits that

White racial identity development can be located in one of six hierarchical statuses. The

first of these is *Contact*, which represents an unawareness of personal racial identity. A

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[6] The WRIAS is copyrighted, and cannot be included as an appendix. To request a copy of this scale for research purposes, contact the *Institute for the Study of the Promotion of Race and Culture* at Boston College, using information found at http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/isprc/research.html

[7] Helms and Carter use the term identity development throughout their writing, but both recognize that identity is fluid and there is an ability to move back and forth between the statuses. I use the term development here and throughout this chapter because of its presence in Helms' and Carter's work. Models of identity assume an endpoint, but there can be no endpoint in identity development.

person in this status is oblivious to racism around her,[8] even if she has benefited from cultural or institutional racism. Race belongs to someone else, and people within the Contact stage advocate a "color-blind" position (Carter, 1997; Helms, 1995). The next status is *Disintegration*, which is the result of burgeoning awareness of identity and racism. A person in this status "comes to realize that the humanistic or 'color blind' racial perspective is not accurate" (Carter, 1997, p. 202). Racism becomes obvious to the person, and the person also recognizes that she is White and that there is a social cost for "violating the rules associated with cross-racial interactions" (Carter, 1997, p. 202). This status is called Disintegration for the emotional turmoil that ensues as the person realizes that race matters. The third status is *Reintegration*, which is a negative result of the awareness that race does indeed matter. A person in this status recognizes racial differences, but believes that Whites are inherently superior. While this person may actually work against oppression, she does "so with the belief that people of color should learn how to adopt White American or European ways of being and lifestyles" (Carter, 1997, p. 203).

While the first three statuses are indicative of movements away from racism, the final three statuses represent the development of a more positive, antiracist White identity. The first of these statuses is *Pseudoindependence*, where the person is more cognitive. This stage reflects the beginning of the "process of learning about and fighting against racial oppression" (Carter, 1997, p. 204). A person in this status responds to racism intellectually, rather than emotionally or behaviorally, seeking to help people of other races work against racism. In so doing, she distances herself from other Whites because she is violating White racial norms while simultaneously raising suspicion from

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[8] I use the feminine pronoun throughout this explanation because this study focuses on white females.

people of other races for helping them "rather than changing Whites" (Helms, 1990, p.

62). From there, one may move to the status of *Immersion-Emersion*, where the person

recognizes that victims of racism and other forms of oppression cannot stop oppression

from happening. Rather than turning to people of other races for answers, or to help them

change to fit into a "White world," a person in this status turns "to Whites to help them

challenge racism" (Carter, 1997, p. 205). In fact, "the goal of changing White people

becomes salient" (Helms, 1990, p. 62). The final status is *Autonomy*, where "the person

has freed self from racism and White racial denial" (Carter, 1997, p. 205). A person in

this status seeks "opportunities to learn from other cultural groups" (Helms, 1990, p. 66).

Thus, a person in this status is not governed by racist attitudes and recognizes her role in

fighting oppression while maintaining a positive racial identity.

Helms (1995) notes that placement along the scale is not static, and that

placement on the scale is the result of experiencing a meaningful event that triggered

maturation in racial identity. The ability for motion within one's standpoint is an

important aspect of feminist standpoint theory and the postpositivist realist theory of

identity (Hames-Garcia, 2000; Hartsock, 1998). In essence, meaningful racial events

would help one to discover her standpoint, to *start from* the perspective of others to

recognize that one can learn more about her own life and how she fits into the racial and

social order when she does so (Harding, 1991). The tenets of critical race theory – that

racism is pervasive and that many Whites have little to no incentive to do anything to

eradicate racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) – become evident to a White person as her

racial identity matures. Through the lens of postpositivist realism, one can see the

political and epistemological importance of identity, and the importance of theorizing

about the process of identity development to better understand oppression and its

perpetuation (Moya, 2002). As evident in my theoretical framework and literature review,

White racial identity is an important part of Whites' understanding how we fit within the

social order; working against racism and other forms of oppression only occurs when

Whites have an awareness of how their identity impacts others. Consequently, Helms'

and Carter's (1990) work to delineate White racial identity development through the

White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) can serve to locate White female

elementary teachers who have experienced a rupture in their identity that allowed them to

develop a positive White identity and move towards becoming multicultural. While there

are differing perspectives as to the validity of the WRIAS (Chun, 2003; Guldseth, 2002;

Jome, 2000), several studies indicate that the WRIAS has good potential of indicating

people who have higher multicultural competency (O'Connor, 1999; Suarez, 2002).

The WRIAS of each teacher was analyzed, and four teachers whose WRIAS

indicated that they fell in the categories of Pseudoindependence, Immersion-Emersion, or

Autonomy were chosen for the next phase of screening, as placement in these statuses

represents development of a positive, antiracist White racial identity. Falling into one of

these statuses also implies that the teacher would have come to a point to recognize the

importance of teaching practices that are antiracist and culturally responsive.

The teachers who were chosen based on the WRIAS were then contacted by

phone or email, and a one-hour classroom observation was scheduled and completed by

the researcher. The purpose of this observation was multifaceted. Primarily, the

observation allowed me to meet these women on their home turf and get a sense of their

classroom teaching style and application of multicultural education principles. The

observation also allowed these women to meet me and gave us an opportunity to gain

rapport with one another. I conducted these observations with Sonia Nieto's (2000)

definition of multicultural education in mind. A rubric was developed (See Appendix E)

that addressed the following tenets of multicultural education: antiracist, basic, pervasive,

important for all students, education for social justice, process, and critical pedagogy.

One of the things specifically looked for during the observations was the willingness of

the teacher to bring ideas into her classroom that are contrary to dominant discourse.

Teaching strategies, such as cooperative grouping, and group discussions that engaged

students and allowed them to offer various perspectives related to their own cultures and

lives were aspects that also informed the observation. This research study does not

pretend to document the pervasiveness of multicultural education in the practices of

White female elementary educators as it is defined by Nieto (2000) and other theorists,

nor does it even purport to document the pervasiveness of multicultural education

practices of the three participants. Rather, evidence of some tenets of multicultural

education within the practices of these teachers who exhibit positive White racial identity

were deemed as confirmation that they comprehend the important role identity plays for

both themselves and their students, and that they have made moves to become more

multicultural in their teaching.

After the observation, the participants were narrowed to three women who

showed strong tendencies towards antiracist actions according to the WRIAS,

multicultural tendencies in their classrooms, and were also women with whom the

researcher had good rapport. Two interviews no longer than two hours in length were

scheduled with each of these participants at a time and location convenient to the

participant, but also a location that would not be rife with interruption. These interviews

constituted the primary source of data in answering the primary question of this study:

How do White women become multicultural educators?

<div align="center">Methodology</div>

In keeping with the framework for this study of feminist standpoint theory, this

study utilized feminist inquiry in its methodology. Key portions of this study were the

interviews that took place after the initial screening of participants. Interviews of

participants were "engaged, interactive, and open-ended" (Bloom, 1998). The researcher

and the participants engaged in conversation, rather than strict interview questions, as

personal anecdotes on the part of the researcher were included while interviewing

participants in an effort to encourage more elaborate responses (Bloom, 1998; Devault,

1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992). As found with other studies that utilize feminist

methodology, "women's diverse lives [served] as the primary source of data" (Bloom,

1998, p. 144). While there were general goals of discussion for each interview,

participants themselves were the guides for the interviews, as their stories directed the

conversation. In keeping with feminist methodology, transcripts from interviews as well

as field notes constituted the major sources of evidence in this study (Bloom, 1998).

Participants also had the opportunity to review both the transcripts and the analysis of

data, which is an integral part of feminist methodology (Bloom, 1998; Kirsch, 1999;

Thompson, 1992).

As the theoretical framework of this study also relies on critical race theory, the

use of participants' stories is in line with tenets of studies that utilize critical race theory.

Critical race theory focuses on "counter-stories," or stories that are often not told. These

stories are tools "for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solorzano, 2002). Postpositivist realism is also central to this methodology, as stories from these women are sought that highlight the development of White identity as socially constructed yet grounded in reality (Alcoff, 2000).

The first of the two interviews focused on learning about the life stories of these women. While feminist methodology specifies that interviews are more like conversations that a question and answer session, prepared questions were developed to ensure that the interviews were productive and topics that needed to be covered were intertwined in the conversation. While the researcher and participant had already previously met at least once, this interview session allowed us to discuss personal histories and to explore areas of similarities and differences between us. Personal histories, places these women have lived, education, and experiences with diversity were the guiding focus of this interview session (see protocol, Appendix F). This interaction allowed us to discuss our first racial memories, and how those memories impacted us as our understandings of our racial and social locations formed and changed. The discussion also focused on events that served as moments of rupture – moments that helped us to recognize our White identity. Field notes were taken during the interview, and the interview was audio taped and later transcribed by the researcher. The technique of participant check was then utilized, as each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview, and make changes as she saw fit, deleting or adding information (Thompson, 1992).

The second of the two interviews focused on how we as teachers acquired our multicultural understandings (see protocol, Appendix F). A particular emphasis during

this interview was to recount and revisit incidents within our own lives that helped us

hear the alarm bells that signal the need for multicultural education, and how it caused us

to reflect upon our own teaching practices. Awareness of White privilege was of interest

to the researcher, as well as the intersection of the awareness to decisions in the

classroom. Discussion about racism in its multiple forms was an important part of this

interview as well, in particular with how racism dysconsciously materializes within our

teaching practice and efforts to fight against it. We also discussed what multicultural

education looks like in our classroom, and how we have made strides to become more

multicultural in our practice, yet critiquing our own practices for ways that we might

improve. Further discussion emerged regarding the political significance of our decisions

as teachers – of interest to the researcher was whether or not these teachers see their

multicultural practice as a political act. Again, field notes were taken during the

interview, and the interview was audio taped and later transcribed by the researcher. As

before, each participant was given the opportunity to review their transcript and make

changes as necessary. Third interviews were scheduled only if needed for clarification

purposes on the part of the researcher.

<center>Data Analysis</center>

Hurtado and Stewart (1997) note that it is important for data collected in feminist

studies to "always be analyzed…from multiple perspectives" (p. 309), particularly when

"the goal is to dismantle oppression" (p. 309). This understanding supports the

framework of this study – feminist standpoint theory informed by postpositivist realism

and critical race theory. This understanding and framework also helps us to keep in mind

that participants are impacted not only by gender but also by other social categorizations. As Bloom (1998) states,

> Using gender as the primary or single analytic category in feminist methodology is problematic, however, when it asserts that gender is *the*, rather than *a*, foundational form of domination. Using gender as the primary analytic category of feminist research may diminish the ways that race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on are equally constitutive of some women's understandings of themselves as subjects and of their experiences of marginalization, unequal treatment, domination, or oppression. (p. 140)

Consequently, intersections of these various categories were examined in recognizing these women's standpoints and understandings about their identity. Interview transcripts were carefully examined for similarities and differences. Transcripts were coded across multiple criteria noting interactions between concerns such as gender, race, social class and ethnicity, particularly as these interactions impact teacher-student relationships, curriculum design and implementation and definitions of multiculturalism in action.

As I utilized feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991, Hartsock, 1998), I was interested in discovering the various perspectives that have informed these women's standpoints. When did these women *start from* a perspective that was not their own? How did these women allow these perspectives to inform their standpoint? What consequences did they become aware of because of their beliefs and behaviors as European American women? What did they change because of their awareness?

As the theoretical framework for this study is also informed by critical race theory, instances where these teachers recognized racism in their own teaching practices

were also of interest, as these instances reflected a tenet of critical race theory that racism

is pervasive (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and the heightened awareness that emerges as

White identity develops. Through the data analysis, critical race theory further allows us

to ask: Are these teachers aware of how their practices work against the dominant

paradigm that many Whites have little incentive to eradicate? Are they aware of how

their practices also work to support the dominant paradigm?

In utilizing the postpositivist realist theory of identity to inform the framework of

this study, formation of identity is an important piece of the puzzle (Mohanty, 2000;

Moya, 2000). The use of the WRIAS gave an indication of maturity within the

participant's racial identity. In analyzing the data, postpositivist realism allows us to ask:

Do these women rely on people of color to teach them about racism? Do they use their

knowledge to try to change or help people of color, or are they working to help other

White women overcome racism? Where did these women access the epistemic privileges

of others, and how do their experiences help them gain knowledge of the world?

While these educators may not see their efforts within multicultural education as

political, or further may not apply the same understandings to multicultural education,

their decision to teach multiculturally is in essence a political one (Sleeter, 1996). The

analysis of data through the lens of feminist standpoint theory informed by critical race

theory and postpositivist realism helps to show the racial, social, and political awareness

and standpoint of these teachers.

<div align="center">Limitations of my Study</div>

This study is limited in the number of participants involved. Qualitative research

in and of itself can be cumbersome, and in this case, in-depth interviews require an

extensive amount of time to both transcribe and to analyze. Participants were limited due to time constraints.

Another limitation is through the selection of the teachers. The people who nominated potential participants may have different understandings of what constitutes multicultural education than I have. The understandings that they utilized may have caused them to nominate someone who continues to implement multicultural education in very surface ways, just more often than most teachers.

The identification process delineated also does not let me know "for certain" if a teacher has truly made moves to become more multicultural in their practices, despite the depth of the screening process. Such a determination is simply not possible.

A further limitation is the location of this study. In some ways, the Metropolitan Atlanta area is too broad, yet in an effort to find White female elementary teachers who have become more multicultural, particularly given the literature that states that White teachers have difficulty making a transition towards multiculturalism, I felt that it was necessary to open the scope of the search to an area that is broader than just one school system. Ironically, only one school system is represented in the study, which also serves to further limit the results.

This study is also limited by my racial and social location. As a White female elementary teacher, what I consider multicultural competence may be considered as incompetence by others outside of my racial and social location.

Putting the Pieces of the Continent Together

This study seeks to learn from White female elementary educators who have an antiracist sense of racial identity what caused them to change how they hear the tolling of

the alarm bells of our growing diverse society. This study uses the framework of feminist

standpoint theory informed by critical race theory and postpositivist realist theory of

identity throughout its design, whether it is the means used to identify participants, the

use of feminist inquiry, or the means of data analysis – each of these components has an

important role within this methodology. Each methodological component, then, becomes

a piece of the continent, allowing for rich reverberations within the understandings of

these women's identities.

CHAPTER FOUR

INVOLVED IN HUMANKIND: THREE TEACHERS' STORIES

Three women participated in this study. These women each completed the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS), and each WRIAS showed that these women have developed an antiracist White identity. Percentage breakdowns of the women's responses to the WRIAS can be found in Figures 1 – 3.[9] These teachers allowed me to observe in their classrooms, and met with me for two interviews, with each lasting an hour to an hour and a half. Each of these women work in the same school system, yet schools that have a different clientele. Sarah is a fourth grade teacher in one of the oldest elementary schools in the county. This school serves students who live in the county seat in housing that varies from apartments and low rent housing to homes broaching $300,000 or higher. This school also has a large African American population, with the number of African American students eclipsing that of any other racial group. Kristen is a fifth grade teacher in a school that is a few years old in the western portion of the county. This school serves a predominantly White clientele, and the students who attend this school live in housing that ranges from mobile homes and apartment complexes to $600,000 or higher homes. Sophia teaches special education in a fairly new school in the southern end of the county. This school also serves a predominantly White clientele, with very few students receiving free or reduced lunch. Homes in this district range in value from low $200,000 to $700,000 or higher. There are no apartment complexes or low rent housing in this district.

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[9] When interpreting the graphs, the three pie slices on the right (Contact, Disintegration and Reintegration) are hallmarks of a negative racial identity. The three pie slices on the left (Pseudoindependence, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy) are hallmarks of a positive racial identity. All three of these women
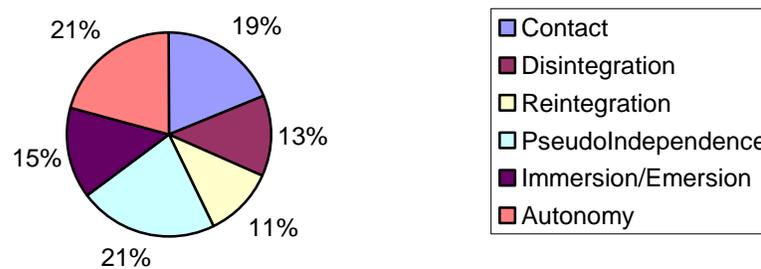
Figure 1: Breakdown of WRIAS Percentages for Sarah
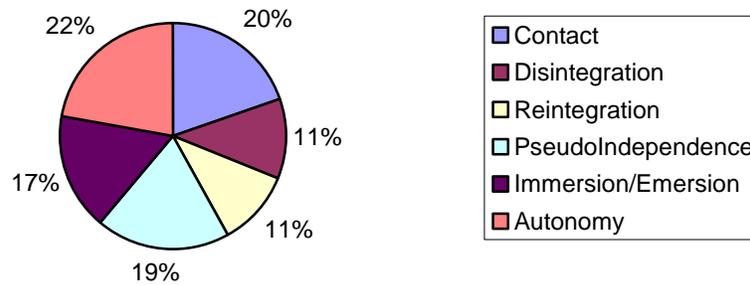
Figure 2: Breakdown of WRIAS Percentages for Kristen
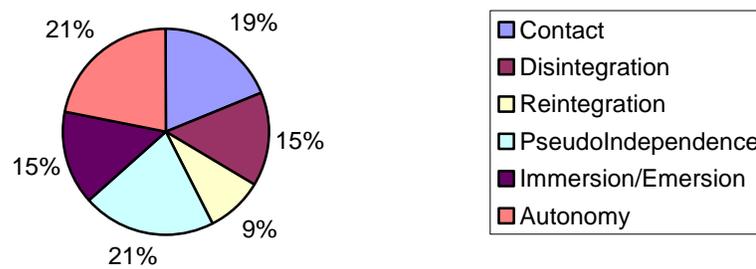
Figure 3: Breakdown of WRIAS Percentages for Sophia

have positive racial identities according to these graphs, as the area of the three pies on the left is larger than the area on the right. For more information on how to interpret the WRIAS, see Helms, 1996.

Sarah's Story

Sarah is a married 41-year-old woman who teaches fourth grade. Other than her ninth grade year in Illinois, Sarah grew up and lived in several cities in Ohio. Her undergraduate degree was completed at Ohio State University, and her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education was earned at Georgia State University.

The community where Sarah grew up was predominantly White. She remembered no African American children in her elementary school or in her church. Her first racial memory is of a friend she had in high school. Only one family in her high school was African American; the rest of the students in her graduating class of over 700 were White. She formed her initial impressions about African Americans through the friend that she had in high school. Sarah expected all Black people to have Afros, and consequently, she was unaware that her roommate in college was African American until midway through her freshman year. "She straightened her hair, and with the limited experience, …[she] looked Indian to me. She had dark skin, but what I thought was African American did not fit her." Neither she nor her roommate hung out with African American friends, although Sarah recalls that Ohio State had a large African American population when she attended. She considers her experiences at Ohio State as the beginning of a kind of journey, a realization that she is not the center of the world.

Sarah recalled very racist attitudes from her parents. "I grew up hearing the N word often, often. I never say it. I hate that word. But that's what I grew up with." In discussing the attitudes of her father, Sarah commented that the attitude comes from fear:

Fear of the unknown, fear of… I don't know what. He's like that with African

Americans; he's like that with people who are Mexicans, people who are Jewish.

I mean you name it. Any group that is different from what he is, there's a wall

there, and a very derogatory wall. You know, if you're not what he is, then

you're not as good.

When Sarah first moved to Georgia, she moved into an apartment complex that

had very few White families. She recalled an uncomfortable feeling at first. Through her

interactions with families in the complex, she came to realize that "these are people, too,

they just have darker skin." She recalled watching movies and hanging out with her

neighbors, and felt an acute sadness when she moved away after three months due to her

husband's transfer to Cincinnati. Sarah commented as well that her memory of this time

matches information she received at a conference on bridging the achievement gap, that

as a culture, African Americans are louder. "That is the memory that I have. It was just a

wild, loud, fun time. You know, I get together with White people and it's fun, I mean I

have fun, but the volume is different."

In addition to the realizations Sarah began to have in college, and her experience

as the minority in an apartment complex, Sarah attributes her antiracist feelings and

understandings to her faith in Christianity. Experiences and discussions she has had with

her husband and children have also helped to change her perceptions. She developed

some understanding of being the "other" when visiting a pool that her husband belongs to

near his work. This pool is in a community that is predominantly African American.

I didn't swim; he just wanted to… show me where he had been going every day,

and it was weird to be on the other end of that, to see [that] this is what people go

through. This is what Black people go through in predominantly White settings

where people are kind of looking at them, what are you doing here, and it was a very uncomfortable feeling.

Conversations with her children have been enlightening for her, too. Her children have had a school experience very different from hers, as they now attend a high school that has a large and growing African American population. She recalled a conversation she had with her thirteen year old daughter about dating:

She said, "Mom, how would you feel if I dated someone who is African American?" And I said, "Well, what does scripture have to say about it?" I always try to go back to scripture. If that's the truth, then that's how we operate, and she said, "Well, I don't think scripture has anything to say about color." I said, "Well, as far as dating, or marriage, the only thing that is really stated in scripture is whomever you marry, or date, has to be a believer. If the person is Asian, if the person is African American, it doesn't matter." And I said, "Now, the people in our church – there are a lot of different opinions about that, but as far as Daddy and I are concerned, if that person loves the Lord, we're ok with it." And she thought for a minute, and said, "Cool." And I thought, you know, it might be difficult. That might be a bridge we have to cross. I can't sit here and say I would be like, "Oh, yeah, great – get married!" I don't know. But I hope – I hope I would do the right thing. That I would be able to say that if you are of the same faith, if you have trusted Christ to forgive your sins, and you love my daughter, then you have our blessing. And we did talk about challenges that married couples face. Society isn't ready to accept that. Children are a difficult part of that. And you know, your children would have some trouble that you would not have. You would need to be very prepared for

that. Maybe by the time that they are of marrying age, society will have come around a little bit, but it is not an accepted thing.

From the classroom observation, I noted that Sarah seems to be very accepting of all of her students. In every interaction that I observed, Sarah focused on the child as if s/he was the most important person in the room. Even questioning techniques served to bring students into the process rather than to make them feel bad for not knowing the answer or not paying attention. When asked what contributed to her being so accepting, Sarah replied that it was her faith.

> I'm not a judge of people, and I'm real careful with myself about feelings about people. If they are negative, I want to know why. You know, my biggest concern, and this is one of the challenges of public schools, my biggest concern is that the children see the Lord in me. Even though I can't share the gospel with them, I can love them, and I can accept them, and they know I'm a believer….I have a Bible on my desk….I put it there, and I've told the students during free reading time they are welcome to read anything on my desk, or on the bookshelf… And some of the students will come and get the Bible and read it…. They need to know that I love them and they know that I love them because Jesus loves them. Even though I can't say it, I'm hoping there will be a connection. Maybe not this year, maybe not five years from now, but somewhere, they'll remember. They'll say, "You know what? Mrs. Smith really loved me." That's what it's all about for me. When it stops being that that's when it's time for me to leave.

In talking about racism, Sarah recalled an incident that occurred at her home. One of her husband's friends and former co-workers, an African American man, had stayed with their family while in the Atlanta area for training. After the visit, one of her neighbors spoke to her and told her that "there had never been nor would there ever be a Black child swimming in their pool." Sarah recalled the horror she felt at this comment:

They were offended, even though it had nothing to do with them. It was our family inviting someone to stay, and that opened up the conversation about the pool. This woman told me that her great-great-grandmother had slaves, and they were treated very well. And I said to her – I was in one of those moods where I was a little bit more verbal than I normally would be – I said to her, "you say they were treated well. Could they have left if they wanted to leave? Were they free to go if they didn't want to work there any more?" And she kind of laughed and said, "of course not." That's unacceptable. From that point, there was a little bit of a rift, which I'm sorry about. We kind of drifted apart.

Moving to Sarah's teaching practices, Sarah wants her students to have an appreciation for diversity. She focuses on having her students step out of the center of their universe. She tries to get her students to keep an open mind, and to rethink stereotypes. "That Black people aren't always this way. Asian people aren't always this way. Mexican people aren't always this way. You know, meet the person first – get to know the person and decide what that person is like." She recognizes the importance of communication with parents, and calls every parent at the beginning of the year to learn more about each child because she feels she can get a better picture of that child through a conversation than a survey. She is convinced that instruction needs to be individualized

to her students, and she works hard to differentiate instruction so that every student in her classroom gets his/her needs met.

When asked if she has always taught this way, Sarah replied no. She began teaching the same way that she had been taught.

I'm the boss, you learn, you absorb what I say, and everything that comes out of my mouth is going to be wonderful, and you're going to remember everything I say and you're going to be so educated by the end of this year.

After taking some time off to be home with her children, she went back to teaching at a private Christian school where she was the only fourth grade teacher. When she tried teaching the way she had been taught, her students did not do very well. Her first thought was that there was something wrong with her students. After some reading and reflection, Sarah decided that what was wrong was her teaching practices. She got permission to go observe in some other fourth grade classes. One teacher in particular caught her attention, as it was obvious that this teacher really knew her students, and had taken time to build relationships with each one.

From that point on I realized you've got to know your children. We've got to know them, because if we don't know them, we can't get them from here to here. They're not a generic mass of nine year olds. I mean, they are individual students with different backgrounds, different families, birth order – everything is completely different about these children. And I know them – do both parents work, is Momma home full time, how many siblings, are you the oldest, are you the baby, are you adopted, are your parents divorced? All those things play into who that little person is. And if I'm not willing to put the work in to find out

what's going on there, I don't deserve to be with them all year. So studying them

is a big part of my teaching – finding out their background, and then observing

when I put an assignment in front of them – how do they respond to that…. And

that's important, otherwise we're just taking a stab in the dark when we educate

them.

Sarah also demonstrated a willingness to go to others to assess her teaching

practices. She mentioned one other woman in her building, a White fourth grade teacher,

who has helped her move into a greater understanding of differentiated instruction. She

also mentioned an African American woman in her building with whom she has bounced

some ideas off in terms of meeting the needs of students of different races. Her main

source, however, is with her own students. Sarah expressed the importance of

relationship with her students, and her appreciation for honest communication with her

students. When she feels that she has made a mistake, she will ask students if something

she said offended.

If I hurt their feelings, and then I get that chance to come back and ask for their

forgiveness, you know, to apologize, that bonds us together.…. There's a love

there that I don't want to offend, and any offense is probably stupidity on my part,

just not being aware.

When asked about any favorite activities done in the classroom that might be

considered multicultural, Sarah discussed a project that her students do that involves

researching African Americans.

Black students don't need to be taught to appreciate the contributions of fellow

Black Americans, but the White students do. We're so used to, you know, I teach

them all the presidents in order from Washington to Bush, and there's not one Black person in there. And it's valuable to know the presidents, and it's also valuable to know all of these others, who perhaps weren't president, but nonetheless made a contribution just as significant. We tend to focus on the White men.

For Sarah, multicultural education means giving each child what he or she needs. She focuses on "treating each child with dignity; treating each child with respect." Sarah enjoys having students share about their cultural and religious beliefs in the classroom, particularly when it allows students to value differences within the commonalities.

I had Muslim students in my class… and one of them was going back to do the pilgrimage… He'd been to Mecca once already and was going again. We pulled down the map and showed where that was and he explained to the class why it's important to go to Mecca, to make that trip. When he came back he showed us a special ring that signified he had been there and what that meant. That's multicultural. Valuing where other people are coming from, what's important to them and what they celebrate.

Imbedded in this discussion is also a frustration that her beliefs and values are not considered appropriate in the classroom. She confessed that she has not taken the word "Christmas" out of her vocabulary. "I refuse to take it out, even though not everyone celebrates it. We talk about Kwanzaa even though not everyone celebrates it. I refuse to go overboard with that for the sake of the others." Sarah recalled a discussion in her school about the word nativity, and how one teacher had wanted to discuss it, but it wasn't allowed.

We've heard Muhammad, we've heard Mother Teresa, we've heard God

mentioned, we've heard all kinds of different spiritual leaders, but not Jesus.

Which kind of bothers me, that he can't be mentioned. We're not telling these

students if they don't believe in Jesus, once they die they're going to Hell. We're

just introducing the name along with the others we've talked about.

Despite Sarah's personal feelings and understandings when it comes to race and

faith, Sarah expressed confusion when asked if she sees any of her actions in the

classroom as political. The question was reworded, and experiences and realizations

from the researcher were brought into the question. Even with this interaction, Sarah was

not able to categorize anything that she does as political.

As Sarah reflected upon her life and teaching experiences, I asked Sarah what she

has learned about racism as she has matured in her understandings. Inherent in her

discussion was a feeling of disgust about racism. She feels that her parents did her a

disservice with their racist attitudes. She expressed confusion and surprise considering

Christian reactions to the civil rights movement: "Where were all the Christians at this

time? Knowing what the Bible says about God looking at the heart and not at the outside,

why was not more done?" Sarah recognizes that she has a long journey ahead of her, yet

also recognizes that she has made a journey:

The farther I get from that starting place, the more hideous it looks to me, It just

looks like a festering boil that is disgusting. That's about the most disgusting

thing I could think of. That's what it looks like when people are treated a certain

way because of the color of their skin. It's just the epitome of ugly. And, I'm not

surprised by it. That's human nature. That's who we are, and I chuckle when

people say, "You know, we're born basically good. We're basically good

people." No, we're not! We're ugly. We need to be taught acceptance. We need

to be taught to love…. Racism – African Americans, things that are said about

Jewish people, there is no excuse for that. And if you were raised that way, that's

not an excuse either.

<div align="center">Kristen's Story</div>

Kristen is a single 42-year-old woman who teaches fifth grade.   Her childhood

was spent in Charleston, South Carolina. Her family moved to Pascagoula, Mississippi

when she was ten years old. During the middle of her senior year in high school, her

parents moved to Lilburn, Georgia. She has lived in the Atlanta area ever since. Kristen

attended Georgia State University for both her undergraduate and Master's Degree.

Kristen remembers being very sheltered as a child. Her parents placed her in a

private church school in Charleston, rather than have her attend a school that was to

integrate. It wasn't until she moved to Pascagoula, Mississippi that she recalls being

associated with African Americans. Kristen was very active in sports, and her

involvement on various sports teams put her in direct contact with African Americans for

the first time on a daily basis. When asked about other childhood memories with

diversity, Kristen pointed out that diversity for her growing up was limited to African

Americans and Whites.

I can't even say it was mixed races. It was Black and White. There really

weren't many in the way of Hispanic or those kinds of things. We didn't have

Asians. In that part of the world, it was Black or White.

Despite the integrated sports teams and school, Kristen recalls that people of different races did not hang out with each other after school hours. "Interaction was mainly at school, when we were together."

Moving to Georgia after living in Mississippi for seven years was a bit of a culture shock for Kristen. She commented how some areas of Mississippi are very racist, but she did not feel that way in Pascagoula. Pascagoula is a coastal town, and somewhat industrialized; she recalls, however, that most of the people who maintained lower paying jobs were African American. Kristen would have stayed in Mississippi to finish high school, but her parents quickly discovered how expensive it was to live in the Atlanta area, and were unable to follow through with the arrangements they had made due to how expensive it would have been for them. Moving in the middle of her senior year in high school added to the shock that Kristen felt.

Kristen commented how far ahead she was in school compared to her peers during her senior year in the suburban Atlanta school she attended. Ironically, her parents originally intended her to attend a school in another district, but she was miserable during the few weeks she was there. Negative attitudes on the parts of the students and teachers made her feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. While she fared better at the high school that she soon graduated from, Kristen remembered that an African American girl enrolled at the same time she did. This young woman was the only African American in the school at the time, and she attended this high school for about two weeks before withdrawing, in part due to the way she was treated. This event was rather disconcerting to Kristen, as she had grown accustomed to being in school with African Americans, and was appalled by the overt racism that was present.

While in college, Kristen recalls some interaction between people of different races. It wasn't until she was out of college and working for Georgia State University, however, that she found herself in closer friendships with others who were not White, particularly professional African American women. A woman whom she worked for was always "doing something that was kind of outside the box." Her friendship with this woman caused her to expand her horizons by going to events like art festivals, poetry readings, and ushering at various playhouses around Atlanta.

While reflecting on her childhood and collegiate experiences, Kristen commented that once she was in an environment where other races were present, she has had friends who were not White.

> You would think, being exposed to a different race so late in my childhood, that I would have had more prejudices. But I think because I was brought up in a Christian home, where you're supposed to love your neighbor as yourself, and that kind of thing, that when I finally got into an environment where there were African Americans, it didn't bother me.

Despite the above comment, Kristen is aware of different racist attitudes of her parents. She stated that her dad would not be condescending, or make hateful comments, but "He sees, often times, African Americans as not being as up to par as a White person would be." Kristen commented how her mom's perception changed when she went back to work in the banking industry. Her mom began to see many African American women as abusing the system, rather than giving their best effort, and this caused her mom to begin to stereotype others. Kristen stated that this put her in a position where she felt she had to step up and say, "you can't say all."

These attitudes exhibited by her parents have made her question how her parents would respond if she were to "bring home" a date to meet her parents who is of a different race. Kristen tested this concern once when she was dating a Chinese man. Her dad surprised her by saying, "You know what – it doesn't matter to me what race they are as long as you are happy." Despite her dad's comment, Kristen remarked that she wasn't sure she would get the same response if she had said she was dating an African American man. Further, she wasn't sure that she would date an African American.

> I don't know that everything is equal with both, and I'm not talking about a fairness equal. I'm just talking about lifestyles, value systems necessarily being the same. Could it be? Yes, it could be. I do think that race would play a factor for me, because I've always…that's something that my parents have said, is that the two should not mix. It's kind of the Biblical thing, where if you are of different – I forget the passage – it was talking about back in those days where the Israelites were matching up with people from other countries…. I think that has always kind of played in the back of my mind, but you know, it was just the other day where there was a very nice looking Black man, and he was a very thoughtful, caring person. I found myself attracted to him, and part of me was saying, "Well, what's wrong with that?" To be attracted to him. I don't know if I could go there.

While Kristen's childhood and personal memories regarding race and diversity represent a fairly sheltered existence, Kristen's student teaching and first teaching position in that same school brought her face to face with racial issues. This school was in south Fulton County and served students who predominantly lived in housing projects

or lower income families who had inherited their homes. The staff was predominantly

White, yet the clientele was predominantly African American. While a larger Hispanic

population has found its way to that school, at the time the Hispanic population was

small.

Kristen felt that from the beginning she had to prove herself as an educator who

could teach Black children:

The thing that always confronted us as White teachers was that White teachers

don't know how to teach Black children. That was the slam that we always got

from the Black teachers that were there, that "you don't know how to handle these

kids. We do. And therefore, you are never going to be as good because of that."

It was a proving ground for us – to be able to show that we could teach these

children. Maybe not in the same manner that they had taught them in the past, but

in a way that could be equally effective.

Kristen commented that the mentality that White teachers can't teach Black

children was one that divided the staff, which was close to equally distributed between

African American and White women. During her first few years at this school, she rarely

collaborated with others in the building. Her final year in this school, however, she was

assigned to team teach with the same woman she had student taught with, an African

American woman. Her prior experience with this woman had been mixed, as the woman

missed a good portion of the student teaching assignment due to pregnancy difficulties.

During her student teaching experience, Kristen was given carte blanche to run the room

as she wished, but when the teacher returned, the instruction changed back to direct

instruction. While she recognized differences in their teaching styles, what appalled her

the most was the teacher's incorrect grammar and spelling. This prior history seemed

daunting to Kristen, as their task that year was to take a class of fifteen students, all of

whom were in fourth or fifth grade and non-readers, and teach them to read. Kristen

recalled the dread she had of working with this teacher.

> When I found out we were going to be paired together, I was like, "Oh my gosh!"
>
> I knew, at least I thought I knew, about her teaching…. [but then] we spent a lot
>
> of time after school together working long hours trying to figure out what do we
>
> do to make these kids learn, because, it wasn't that they had had bad teachers
>
> previous to this – they had had some outstanding teachers. So why aren't they
>
> learning? Why aren't they moving forward? What hasn't been done for them? So
>
> we were spending hours together trying to figure these things out. And one of the
>
> things I grew to appreciate about [her] was that she – she saw her kids. She knew
>
> what was happening in their lives. She could see – notice things – that I wasn't
>
> noticing. I was so into the teaching and the instructional part of it that I wasn't
>
> seeing the child. I was just seeing that I'm putting the fun activities, the things
>
> that are making them get excited about learning. As far as seeing the meat of that
>
> child, and seeing that there is something different about the way that they are
>
> dressing today, notice this on their face, or notice this on their arm, or that kind of
>
> thing. I wasn't noticing that…. She changed my perspective on how to look at
>
> children, and how to look at my teaching. That this was not all about being a
>
> good instructor. It was also about being a person who saw the hearts of your
>
> children, and saw their eyes, and saw them there, because a lot of our children
>
> were being abused, and you needed to be aware of the little changes that they

often times were covering up. You couldn't see it right off unless you really, really took note of every single detail about them. And so, I have to say that I grew to respect her tremendously because of this.

Kristen also commented on how her teaching practices changed in this environment. In watching African American teachers, she was at first distressed by the directness with which they managed the children. She learned, however, that this tactic was a good one, as many of her students were not responsive to coercive measures.

When you start seeing the reality of some of the lives that these children had to lead, saying, "I like the way you da da da…" is not necessarily going to work with these children. They need to know that you're dealing with the real world. You are going to talk to them emphatically and honestly and to the point. They don't want to mess around with it. You're dealing with fourth graders, and they are the parents in the household. These are kids that you don't need to beat around the bush. You tell them straight, and they'll make sense of it. That part was very hard, to kind of take in a little bit of that and learn how to still nurture but yet have some strength behind what I was saying with them.

In this teaching environment, Kristen frequently looked for opportunities to show her students a different world other than the projects in which they lived. Her last year working at the school she took her students to the beach, and while she has spent her life going to the beach, the experience caused her to see the beach for the first time, just as her students saw it. Other things she did included having parties at her house, and her students would swim in the pool. "They thought my little three bedroom house was a mansion." Back at school, she would use these events as a means to encourage her

students to work hard, and would frequently tell her students that they could have what she has if they worked hard in school. One of her students told her point blank that she didn't have to work hard. When Kristen asked her what she meant, the student said, "We have everything we need. I have a house. I have food. Whenever my birthday comes, or Christmas comes, I have all those things, too. We don't have to work to get all those things." Kristen grew frustrated with the mentality that there was no need to try to better oneself. She commented on the relative handful of parents, or grandparents, of students in the building who pushed their children so they could have better.

Teaching in this environment was emotionally hard on Kristen. She would frequently take her students home, and seeing the conditions that they lived in was disturbing. She saw drug deals happening right outside her students' doors, and saw her students raising themselves. She found it hard to let her students go home at night, particularly when she knew of violence that occurred in their homes. "If home wasn't a safe place, you were coming home with me." A "stepfather" person murdered one of her students, and

> It ripped my heart out. It was like one of my own children dying. And I couldn't stay there. I couldn't because it didn't feel like I was making enough of a difference. As hard as I tried, I couldn't make it better.

Kristen took a job in the county where she works now in part because of the emotional stress that working in an inner city environment perpetuated. "I needed to get away and see that there were some things that were still out there that were positive and that were good." While she finds joy in her job, she does not feel as needed. She did come to recognize, however, that her students, who are now predominantly White and are

predominantly upper middle class, needed her because of her experiences in a different environment. She wants her students to develop empathy, to recognize that their lives are different from other people's lives.

> I began to realize that was the reason I was here, was to let them see what reality really is like and to make them question and to make them try to understand and to delve and to try to get the answers of why would people treat people that way, why would people want to live that way, why would people not want to better themselves?

Kristen has moved from being a teacher of reading, to a teacher that teaches history from the Civil War to the present. She feels that her experiences with diversity help her teach difficult concepts to students.

> It just makes me look at the world a whole lot differently, and being a history teacher, I've just had to sit back and evaluate why do I think the way I do? What makes people make decisions the way they do? How can I incorporate different interests? How can I incorporate different nationalities and races? How can I explain things – when you get to World Wars and those kinds of things that have to do with racism and prejudices and all those different things? How do you talk about those things and not offend the ones that are here of that nationality, but at the same time that you don't skirt the issue on it?

Kristen is very comfortable talking about race in her classroom, although she admits that when she first began talking about race in a predominantly White setting, she had some discomfort, mainly out of a concern that she would offend her African American students. She used to ask them to let her know if she offended or if they were

uncomfortable. She states that she doesn't do that anymore, mainly because she is more

comfortable with the content and the history. She wants her students to have an

appreciation for other cultures, and enjoys the fact that her portion of the curriculum has

imbedded in it so many discussions of cultural issues like Hitler, the Japanese internment,

and Vietnam. For example,

> I definitely don't take the textbook approach where we just read about Hawaii,
>
> and we annexed it, and it became a state, da da da. I want them to understand
>
> who the Hawaiians were and what we did to their way of life when we did that.
>
> We have a saying that I'm constantly going back to, because when you look at
>
> history, probably the thing that spearheads most of everything is, and I always
>
> bring it out, is that money is the root of all evil. Greed makes you do a whole lot
>
> of things. Greed has made us do a lot of awful things, to people of other races and
>
> nationalities, but it's also because of our money and our wealth we've been able
>
> to help a lot of other nations and people of various races.

Kristen sees multicultural education as something that needs to be pervasive in

her teaching. Her favorite activity in the classroom is an event called "Immigration

Day." This activity allows her students to find out their own personal history and how

their family came to the United States. This activity also allows her students to make

personal connections to history, to see how the Civil War, or other big events in history

affected their family

> For them to realize that none of us are originally from here, we all come from
>
> different worlds and for them to get a taste of that and to realize it becomes
>
> personal in that way. Take for instance the ones who find out that they are of

German descent and we talk about what Germans did during World War II… It

begins to hit some chords that these kids didn't necessarily perceive are issues for

them, but it was for their families.

I asked Kristen how her African American students responded to this activity.

She stated that many of them are unable to trace their roots back very far, but she does

ask them to find out what they can about their families.

I ask them just to go back and to sit with a grandparent and just let them talk

about their lives, of their memories, of their childhood, and the things they've

seen that are significant historically, because most of them have grandparents who

had to deal with the Civil Rights Movement and those kinds of things. That's just

as much value for them to learn as it would be for them to find out their original

roots were back in wherever.

While she had never really thought of her actions as political, when asked if she

sees her actions in the classroom as political, Kristen quickly grasped on to the idea. She

recognized that anytime that one seeks change, that implies politics, and that politics did

not have to be on the national or state level, but could also be within schools and families.

Her desire to change attitudes of her students is indeed a political desire.

In comparing the school environments where she has worked, Kristen noted some

definite differences. While she learned to be very direct with her African American

students, particularly when disciplining, she had to learn to back off a bit with her White

students. Her students in the inner city environment recognized how much she had done

for them, and she was able to use that as a tool to get her students to straighten up. The

students in a more affluent environment, however, take for granted anything extra that

she provides in her instruction. In both communities, however, she sees that a work ethic is not being instilled in the children. "I think we've grown a whole society of people who just expect it – White and Black – who expect things to be done for them."

Despite her successes, Kristen continues to sense frustration in her present teaching position because she sees her students as so endowed yet unappreciative. She can see herself returning to the inner city environment, although she would like to return in a different capacity, one that would allow her to empower the community.

When asked about what she sees as White privilege, Kristen commented that there is a tendency to seek out Whites when one is White. That we tend to "naturally gravitate" towards what is comfortable. She also sees that within particular contexts, there is a sort of "Black privilege," meaning that if she were in a predominantly Black community, she would not be as accepted because of her skin color. Within the discussion, she did bring up an area that surprised her when she worked with her African American teammate in the inner city school. This woman was preparing for a Bible study, and Kristen recalled how amazed she was that all the pictures of Bible characters in this woman's Bible study were of Black women. "I had never thought of it that way."

Reflecting further on race and her life experiences, Kristen expressed frustration with people who do not use merit to get ahead, but rather continually go back to race.

I think we have changed so much in our perspectives that when I hear African
Americans who really are plugging the race issue, I really want to get angry
because they really don't understand that they have not had to deal with what their
ancestors had to deal with…. Is there still this White privilege mentality? Yes. Is
it wrong? Yes. But, from where things have come, we really have made a great

many strides. Do we have a long way still to go? Sure. But don't keep saying,

acting like we are still back here…. Please give some credit to the strides that

have been made and then try to move forward from the place where you are here.

Don't keep going back. I'm right here.

<p align="center">Sophia's Story</p>

Sophia is a married 49-year-old woman who teaches special education. While she

currently teaches on the elementary level, she has also taught middle and high school.

Sophia grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, but has also lived in Gadsden, Alabama,

Jacksonville, Florida, as well as six cities in Georgia – Commerce, Rome, Alpharetta,

Jonesboro, Woodstock, and Newnan. She attended Berry College and Georgia State

University for her undergraduate degrees, and earned her Master's Degree from Brenau

University.

Sophia's childhood is one of a sheltered existence. As part of her Mennonite

upbringing, she knew very little about the Civil Rights Movement or Vietnam, as they

had no televisions in the home. Their only source of news was the newspaper, and she did

not read it as a child. Sophia encountered cultural differences with people early on in her

life due to her religious practices, but had no experience with people of other races until

she was in late childhood. Her first memory of seeing an African American was in

Atlantic City at a hamburger stand. She recalls asking her father what was wrong with

the child, as her skin was so dark. She remembers the simple explanation that the girl

was Black.

Sophia's family moved to Alabama in the late 60s, and she recalls being shocked

by the overt prejudices that her peers displayed. These prejudices were not just about

race, but also about any religious differences other than the "norm" in the area, which was Southern Baptist. Sophia stated that this was the first time she realized that if "you were a little bit different, you're not accepted at all." Sophia recalls a playground incident within the first few days of moving to Alabama:

> There were some little girls playing dutch jump rope, which I knew how to do, and I asked them if I could join them. One little girl turned to me and said, "No. My mother told me not to play with you because you are a foreigner…. And that foreigners had diseases." I went home and just cried. My mother thought it was funny. I remember her laughing.

> Experiences like these ran counter to Sophia's Mennonite background. Sophia is quick to point out that what is taught at church is practiced at home, and those lessons include being accepting of other people and cultures, as well as a belief that men and women are equal. "I never heard my parents make a racial slur in my entire life. It just never came out of their mouth. I never heard them make a derogatory remark about anyone."

Later, during her college years at Georgia State, Sophia recalls that one of her best friends was an African American from Mississippi who was in many of her classes. The two of them quickly found commonalities as this woman told stories of not being accepted back home, in part because her father was a doctor and her mother a stay at home Mom.

> White people wouldn't accept her because she was Black, and Black people didn't accept her because they felt she wasn't Black, because they were so well

educated…. It was just fascinating to listen to her talk about how lonely she was

growing up because she didn't fit in.

While Sophia had limited experience with race as a child and teenager, her

experiences being "different" set the groundwork for understanding cultural and racial

differences as a teacher. Sophia recalled an event from when she first started teaching

that showed her the reality of cultural difference. The principal walked into her

classroom and asked a White male in her class to take off his hat, and then turned to her

and told her rather emphatically that she had best enforce the rules.

> And it just hit me wrong. I piped back and I said, "I am from Lancaster,
>
> Pennsylvania, my family is Mennonite, and I grew up around Amish country
>
> where you keep your head covered. This is a southern thing for you, sir. It is not
>
> for me. I don't have anything that tells me that he is being disrespectful with his
>
> hat on his head. And I'm sorry, but it is probably going to happen again." He
>
> never said another word to me.

As part of her teaching experience, Sophia taught in Jacksonville, Florida in an

elementary school that served an extremely poverty stricken area. She had been focusing

on whether or not her students were fed or cared for, not the color of their skin. She had

a sudden realization that she wasn't completely keying in to her students one day when

her principal asked for her to fill out information on a report "real quick" that delineated

the race of her students. Sophia stated that that moment was when she realized that she

had to be aware of racial and cultural differences when she was teaching, but not when

she was caring about them:

These were just kids that I loved; they were not Black or White. And I was actually excited about that, because I realized that I could love somebody and care for them without there being any association with where they came from or what color they were.

Other experiences that Sophia recalls include teaching a very diverse group of self contained special education students at a middle school in inner city Atlanta for four years. These students were White, African American, Hispanic, and Asian. The first year that she was there she had an extremely difficult time working with her students; over the summer prior to her second year, she spent a lot of time reflecting and realized that her students would never accept her until she accepted them.

I had to get rid of the shock value when they told me things. And I had to take it for face value. This was their world. And that became a big part of my teaching. Allowing them to bring what they did at home, what they did in the community, into the classroom. A lot of the learning was based on that.

This acceptance of her students translated into other teaching strategies. "I realized that a lot of them didn't have any reason to be proud of their race." Sophia brought in materials for her reading class on women, Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans, and allowed her students to pick out what they were interested in for instruction. "I found that the Hispanic children were just as interested in learning about the Black culture, and the Black children were just as interested in learning about [other cultures]." Interestingly, the only culture her students did not want to learn about was the White culture, in part because they felt surrounded by it all the time.

Pointing out her religious upbringing, Sophia stated that one of her strengths is that she has the capability of listening to and valuing what other people have to say. "Daddy used to always tell me that no one ever learns anything by running their mouth, that if you stay quiet, you'll learn a lot." Sophia mentioned that truly listening and valuing what people of other cultures have said to her has helped her understand better, particularly when maneuvering relationships cross-culturally, whether it be personal or professional. Some of these people whose counsel she has valued include three paraprofessionals, all of whom were African American, who worked with her at the middle school in Atlanta for letting her know when she was on the wrong path with her students. One of the biggest compliments Sophia ever received was from one of these women:

> She said, "You know, it's embarrassing to me that I've sat here for four years with you and you have done more to make these kids aware of their cultural background as a White woman than a Black person has done."

While she began to infuse other cultures into her teaching in this middle school environment, Sophia also began dating an African American man. As the romance between the two of them blossomed, Sophia recalls how easily her grown daughters from a previous marriage accepted this man. She also commented that she received quite a different reaction from her sisters.

> My oldest sister, even though she is a wonderful person, and grew up Mennonite, and grew up without racism, married just a good old redneck. I think she was concerned about what he would do. He died a few years ago, and when he died, [my sister] became a completely different person. And now she wants to know

when we'll come visit them. It was the fear of his reaction, because I don't think she really cares what people think. It was him.

Sophia dated this man for four years, and has been married to him for the past two years. In discussing her relationship, Sophia points out that the relationship with him has not been difficult; what has been difficult is forming a relationship with his family, as she is still figuring out "where to tread." One comment Sophia makes, though, is her continual amazement with how giving people are towards her when she is the only White person in the group.

> I've had little things happen where I think I just don't know that White people would be so accepting, or "here, what can I do"…. You're wondering would you treat another Black person that way, or are you doing this because I'm White. And there have been times I've felt that way at family reunions.

Sophia is keenly aware of White privilege, in part from watching her students when in the inner city environment, her teaching responsibilities, as well as her interactions with her husband. She cited examples such as how people are treated in stores or restaurants, to the difficulty she had finding Christmas cards without a White Santa for her husband's family, and further commented:

> I always believed that everybody has the opportunity to go to school; that everyone has the opportunity to have the same things in life. Where you live, and who your family is, and your socioeconomic status and even your racial status really does hold you back even in 2005.

With Sophia's present job, she is highly aware of how cultural differences impact her students, particularly during the testing process for special education.

A lot of what I do is in testing, and I actually give IQ tests to find out their

cognitive ability. I've been doing this for a number of years. And I know in my

heart that I have gotten low scores from African American children and Hispanic

children because of the way that test is designed. I know their intelligence is

higher… but I can only read the findings of the test. That's my job: administer

the test, and tell the parents what the findings are. So much of what they do in

their cultures is not a lack of being able to learn better, but it's the culture. It's

what they hear spoken. Especially the vocabulary section, verb agreements…

They have a lot of errors in saying "goes" instead of "go." It's what they hear

daily. It's not that they are incapable of learning the difference, but this is what is

spoken at home. It's what is spoken around the community. Yet we're going to

grade them and say that we're looking at low intelligence.

Sophia remarked that she has extreme discomfort in her present job as well, one that she

has held only since the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, in part because of the

lack of diversity in the school. "I think almost on a daily basis, 'is this where I belong?'

And I keep coming back, 'No. It isn't.' I have a lot of skills that I have worked for

twenty years to acquire being wasted."

Sophia talked about the change in attitude she has had over the years as a teacher,

how at one point she wanted to help inner city kids find the way to "do things right."

Sophia recalls a student she had, who had a "very beautiful smile," who would not stop

fighting.

I remember one day telling him, "You can't do this. You need to stop fighting.

This is not how we handle things." And he said, "Maybe in your world you don't,

but in my world, if I want to survive," and he lived in Vine City, "If I want to

survive in my world, I do." I don't think I ever said anything else to him about

fighting again, other than to tell him he needed to look for another way to handle

this. As far as just fussing at him about fighting, I couldn't do that. Because I

realized that that was his world. I know where Vine City is.

Incidents like these permeate Sophia's memory. Her students helped her realize that she

needed to change, to open herself up to thinking differently. When she first started

teaching, Sophia desired to be a savior for her students. She also had a belief that by

including African American pictures and stories, that she had done her job, that she had

in some way helped. Ironically, she now feels that instead, her kids saved her. She

commented that by recognizing that her students needed to learn about their culture and

their history, that they were able to gain pride in who they are. Her job was not to save

them, but to recognize the world in which they lived, and use that world to inform her

teaching.

<center>Becoming Multicultural Educators</center>

These three teachers have each begun a journey to becoming multicultural

educators. As we shall see in the following analysis, they are each at different points in

their journey, in part because of their experiences and their ability to allow the epistemic

privilege of others inform their understandings and/or standpoint.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS: HARMONIES AND DISHARMONIES

Pitch Similarities

Sarah, Kristen, and Sophia have all begun a journey towards becoming

multicultural educators, yet each one is at a decidedly different location in her journey.

Each woman spoke to the importance of spirituality in her home, with each professing

strong beliefs in a form of Christianity. Each has experience working in schools that

serve majority African American students, and each one had limited experience with

races other than White in her formative years. All three women also completed part of

their education at Georgia State University in downtown Atlanta. Coincidentally, all

three women are in their 40s, and all three women were born in a state outside of

Georgia.

Two interesting phenomena happened with each participant. While it was made

clear that the multicultural understandings that were being examined applied to more than

one race, the discussion primarily focused on African American and White race relations.

Considering the geographic location of the study, this phenomenon is relatively

unsurprising, as Black and White relations have been central to race discussions in this

area for decades. Also, although no questions were asked regarding interracial

relationships, this topic was discussed in the interviews of all three women. While I was

already aware that Sophia is married to an African American man prior to our interviews,

the conversation regarding her relationship with her husband emerged naturally during

her interviews. The other two participants moved into discussions about interracial

relationships on their own. The concern that "society isn't ready" was noted, as well as

concerns about family reactions, yet a 2001 survey of biracial couples showed that a majority of biracial couples report tolerance to their relationships on the part of their families (Fears & Deanne, July 5, 2001). Both of those participants cited Biblical precepts regarding interracial relationships, but each had different interpretations. Kristen's reason harkened back to Deuteronomy 7:3-4, where the Israelites are told not to intermarry with the Canaanites. Therefore, in her interpretation, interracial marriage is not approved of by Christianity. Sarah, on the other hand, referred to II Corinthians 6:14, which tells believers not to be "yoked with unbelievers." Thus, in Sarah's view the racial background of a potential partner is not relevant, but whether that person is also a Christian is the relevant factor.

Religious references are not surprising in this context. This study took place in the heart of the Bible belt, where there is a huge emphasis on religion and faith in many personal and societal interactions. Mennonite understandings are not common, however, as this area of the country is more known for Southern Baptist, Methodist, and other Protestant denominations. Sarah spoke to the tension that can be found between professed Christian beliefs and racist tendencies, citing the example of how, prior to the Civil Rights Movement, many people who professed to be Christians also supported segregation. Despite the acknowledgement on the part of all three participants that racism is counter to Christian precepts, they each were able to name instances of racism by close family members. Two of the participants, Sarah and Kristen, both cited the awareness of overt racist tendencies on the part of their parents. Both were apologetic on behalf of their parents, and both feel that they have moved beyond racism as they learned it as children. Sophia noted the lack of acceptance of her relationship with an African

American man on the part of her sister's husband, and her sister's compliance with this racism while her husband was living. In the interpretations of all three participants in my study, Christianity is interpreted as promoting equality among races. Nonetheless, there is some acknowledgement that at least some Christians maintain racist views. This is passed off as hypocrisy, and antithetical to Christian principles.

The pitch similarities among these women are constituted by religious undertones that permeate the conversations and interpretations of experience. While Christian understandings are not the intent of this analysis, the recognition of the similarity is important due to the geographic and social location of this study. The following examination of pitch differences, however, gets to the heart of these women's journeys to become more multicultural educators.

<div align="center">Pitch Differences: Applying the Framework</div>

Sarah

With feminist standpoint theory as the framework for this study, I wanted to find out if and when these women *started from* perspectives other than their own in informing their standpoint. Having a standpoint implies having a political perspective that is achieved through knowing political struggle and is not just an accident of location or circumstance. Based on this understanding, Sarah does not have a standpoint. For Sarah, most of her understandings about racism are intellectual and religious, and have occurred within the confines of family interrelations rather than through political struggle or close relationships with people of color. She has not accessed the epistemic privileges of people of color in any of her understandings about multicultural education or racism.

While Sarah does practice some multicultural teaching strategies, such as the importance of relationship building with her students and discussing race and culture in the classroom, this practice is part of living out her Christian understandings of showing love for "all God's children." When she has been concerned about her teaching practices, she has primarily sought help from other White teachers who have similar teaching styles, or styles she wished to emulate. Admittedly, she has gone to her students when she has been concerned that she has done something offensive, yet this way of learning about racism or culture does not truly access epistemic privilege of others as a means to inform a standpoint. Asking children to help an adult to understand racism places a burden upon these children that they are not ready for, while simultaneously absolving one of White guilt. Further, despite Sarah's desire to build positive relationships with her students, her relationship to power as the authority figure in the classroom makes it difficult for a young person to point out when she has been offensive.

While Sarah has experienced moments of being "the other," such as when she visited the pool her husband had joined, or was the minority in an apartment complex, these moments appear to have little weight in informing her actions, other than to give her a taste of how life might be different for her if she were not White. Despite the fact that Sarah currently teaches at the school that has the most diversity, compared to the other two participants' schools, her multicultural education stance appears to be one that does not focus on the relevance of diversity, but rather the importance of a positive school experience for all of her students. Further, Sarah does not have the experience teaching in an inner city environment that the other two participants have. The realities of people of color that Sarah has witnessed may not be as far removed from her own due

to social class standings of her students, and consequently may not have as much epistemic weight for her as what the other participants have witnessed. While she does not profess a propensity for being "colorblind," she uses "colorblind" language in her description of what it means to know each child individually, as witnessed by her use of language representing "all God's children." Her attention is specifically on aspects such as birth order, siblings, and marital status of their parents. This understanding is more central to her teaching than recognizing racial and cultural differences.

For Sarah, the Bible is the source of knowledge and truth. This source guides her actions, and shapes her understandings. Her identity, then, is more of a Christian identity than a White identity, looking "at hearts," not color or race. Her interpretations tend toward the conservative side; that is, her actions serve to conserve the status quo, including the subservient role of women. Sarah does have antiracist tendencies in her teaching, and has moved beyond the *Tourist Approach* to multicultural education, as determined by comfort in talking about race in the classroom, as well as her desire to affirm the cultures of her students (Moore & Derman-Sparks, 1993). Her approach to multicultural education, as described in the literature review, is closest to the *Human Relations Approach*, as her actions in the classroom serve to develop positive self-concept among her students (Sleeter, 1996). While the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) denotes Sarah as falling closer to the *Autonomy* status than the other two participants, the interview and classroom observation combined indicate that she is closer to the *Pseudoindependence* status, as she is more cognitive in her understandings about racism (Helms, 1990; Carter, 1997).

Although Sarah has frustration that her personal spiritual beliefs are not affirmed in the classroom environment, she places them there on a regular basis, which is indeed a political act. A rupture that would allow her to recognize that her actions as a White, Christian woman in the classroom are political has not occurred. Sarah's thoughts on racism have more to do with overt forms of racism, rather than dysconscious forms that manifest themselves in White privilege. Consequently, Sarah is not aware of how her practices may help to eradicate dysconscious racism, nor is she aware as to how her practices support racist tendencies of the status quo.

Kristen

When applying feminist standpoint theory to Kristen, it appears that she has started from perspectives other than her own to *begin* to develop a standpoint. Kristen first discussed negative societal images that were far removed from her previous personal experiences within the inner city environment as key to shaping her understandings. Kristen recognized, however, that she experienced a shift in understanding about teaching through her interactions with her African American teammate. While she initially perceived this woman as perpetuating grammatical errors among students and not highly qualified academically, she later grew to respect her and developed an appreciation for her ability to "truly see" their students. She also recognized the merit in some strategies of other African American peers that were counter to strategies she had learned in college, such as speaking directly to her students rather than using "I messages." These two changes to her pedagogy consequently moved her teaching towards being more culturally sensitive than it had been prior. Both of these changes to her teaching also constitute a rupture in identity for Kristen, as she had to change the definition of "good

teacher" that she had previously applied to herself and others. In this context, she recognized that her standards for "good teaching" were not the only appropriate ones, and her own teaching skills were actually lacking. The changes in teaching style and understandings are a direct result of moving to a perspective that is not her own to inform her standpoint. Further, she later recognized that some teaching strategies, like the "direct approach" as opposed to "I messages," had different results in predominantly White, middle class schools.

According to the WRIAS, Kristen's racial identity profile is equally divided between the *Autonomy* and *Pseudoindependence* statuses. Based on classroom observation and the interviews, Kristen is closer to *Pseudoindependence* than the other antiracist identity statuses, particularly when examining her desire to go back and empower the inner city community. In looking at her current teaching practices, one could also say that she falls into the *Immersion/Emersion* status as well, as she is helping her White students to challenge racism (Helms, 1990; Carter, 1997).

Along similar lines, it seems that Kristen's approach to multicultural education changes based on the demographics of the school. When Kristen worked in an inner city environment, her approach to multicultural education was more of the *Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different* (Sleeter, 1996), as she frequently wanted to show students what they could have if they "worked hard." Kristen did not recognize economic and social barriers for her students as such, and continues to look to the ideology of meritocracy. Within a more White, middle class environment, however, Kristen's teaching has shifted closer to the *Multicultural Education Approach* (Sleeter, 1996). Culture infuses her teaching, and her goal is that of presenting multiple

perspectives throughout the curriculum. She wants her students to gain an awareness that culture and race are important, and that the actions of the dominant culture have impacted people of color in both negative and positive ways, as evidenced by her discussion of how she teaches about Hawaii.

This change in multicultural education approach is an interesting one, and raises some questions of its own; questions that are not answerable at this time. If Kristen were to return to an inner city classroom, having had the experiences in a more affluent, predominantly White setting, would her approach change again? It seems that her experiences within the inner city context did help shape her current teaching practices. Is this change an example of dysconscious racism? Perhaps it is an example of culturally responsive teaching, as she has become aware of the importance of understanding culture for all races, and this is her response to a predominantly White culture.

While Sarah did not have a moment of rupture nor a standpoint, it appears that Kristen has experienced a moment of rupture that has allowed her to *begin* to form a standpoint. Like Sarah, her understandings of racism are still primarily limited to overt understandings, rather than dysconscious ones that bring a greater awareness of White privilege. While Sarah tends to rely on her students as the experts with race, Kristen has a tendency to rely on her own intellect and hard work as the means to understanding, rather than allowing epistemic privilege of people of color to have a more predominant role. Unlike Sarah, Kristen has the ability to see her actions as political, but she had to talk herself through the question to come to this realization. Her experiences as a teacher of history helped her achieve this understanding, and she realizes that her goal as an educator is to elicit change, in the present and in the future.

Sophia

Of the three participants, Sophia is the only one who has truly developed a standpoint. Sophia has a firm understanding of oppression, in part from having always felt "a little different" and not accepted because of her cultural and religious differences, and also as a result of her relationships with people of color. Her cultural and religious differences may have given her a disposition that allowed her to "listen and learn" from others. As she has met and befriended people of color, she has taken many opportunities to learn from them and to recognize how their world is shaped because of racism or classism. Her teaching style changed because she realized that her students would never accept her until she accepted them and all that they brought with them into the classroom. The epistemic privilege of the African American paraprofessionals in her classroom was used regularly, as she turned to them for guidance in meeting the needs of her multicultural classroom. This use of epistemic privilege is very different from how Sarah goes to her students to gain understanding about racism and culture, or how Kristen relies on her own intellect and observation to understand differences. While there was still a power differential present in the classroom, Sophia's use of the paraprofessionals for assistance, but not asking them to do the work for her, demonstrates an understanding that what she knows versus what they know is different because of racial and social location. For her to be the most effective teacher in that classroom, she had to understand how race and class impacted her students, and not limit her understanding to what a White woman thinks is best. Who better to turn to than those who live the differences on a daily basis?

Like Kristen, Sophia has also experienced a moment of rupture with her identity. She quickly pointed to her realization that she had been "colorblind" as her moment of rupture in the interviews; I believe an additional moment of rupture occurred for her after working in an inner city Atlanta middle school for a year and recognizing that not allowing race and culture to inform her teaching was causing her to be unsuccessful with her students. Unlike Kristen, Sophia's moments of rupture have allowed her to form a standpoint. Her realization that race matters in her understandings of her students changed how she approached her teaching, and she recognized that her actions have political significance in the classroom. She still kept as her focus the well being of each child, but she also recognized that race and culture affected the interactions that she would have with her students, as well as other staff members in the building. Further, she drew upon her students' cultures in planning instruction, rather than relying on a pre-set curriculum, which is a means of going against the dominant paradigm. In her present position, she continues to feel great angst as a special educator as she identifies students of races and cultures that are not White in larger numbers than those who are White, yet she also feels powerless to do anything about it.

Sophia frequently accesses the epistemic privilege of people of color to help her in her understandings, in part because of her relationship with her husband who is African American. She is easily able to see White privilege, as she is frequently treated differently than he is, even when they are together. Her actions and words show that she is not interested in being a savior for people of color, as Kristen would like to be, and she recognizes that her identity as a middle class White woman has salience in a world shaped by race, class, and gender.

According to the WRIAS, Sophia, like Kristen, shows equal tendencies towards *Autonomy* and *Pseudoindependence* statuses. Based on the observation and the interviews, however, Sophia seems to hover between *Immersion/Emersion* and *Autonomy* (Helms, 1990; Carter, 1997). She welcomes the opportunity of learning from other cultural groups, and she also has a desire to help other Whites to challenge racism. Sophia's approach to teaching most closely resembles the *Multicultural Education Approach*, as she infuses culture into her content, and uses it as a way to facilitate "academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups" (Banks, 2001, p. 13).

<div align="center">Relevance of Pitch Differences</div>

The pitch differences between these women are significant. While all three women have moved beyond a cursory, superficial approach to multicultural education, Sarah's lack of rupture makes her approach to multicultural education one that focuses more on sensitivity than on substance. Kristen and Sophia both have a more developed sense of multicultural education as an antiracist practice than Sarah, in part because of the ruptures to their identity that allowed them to assess their teaching practices from a cultural perspective. While Kristen has begun to develop a standpoint, only Sophia has fully developed a standpoint that allows her to see the consequences of her actions as a White woman working against racism through her educational practices.

<div align="center">Use of the WRIAS</div>

When one goes back to the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale profiles for each participant (see Figures 1-3 in chapter 4), it would seem that Sarah would have an identity that is the most antiracist, while both Kristen and Sophia would have racial

identities that are extremely similar. In reality, the three women seem to fit on a

continuum with Sarah having more of a "colorblind" viewpoint and Sophia having the

most antiracist identity.

Was the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) a good screening tool in

this process? I am not convinced, particularly as observations and interviews gave me a

different impression about the participant's identity as compared to the results of the

inventory itself. In addition, all the scales that were returned to me showed that the

potential participant had a positive White identity. Admittedly, everyone who received a

WRIAS had been recommended as an educator who applied multicultural education

understandings to their teaching, so it follows logically that these women would have

positive racial identities. While I remain unconvinced that the WRIAS was a good

screening tool, I recognize the value of the WRIAS in providing a framework to discuss

these women in terms of their racial identity. I also recognize the value that this

quantitative tool gave me in completing a qualitative analysis of the data.

<center>Listening to the Pitches: Findings</center>

Out of curiosity and for basis of comparison with the participants of this study, I

also completed the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and analyzed my

multicultural teaching practices based on the definitions presented in the literature

review. As stated in the first chapter, I experienced a kind of rupture when I was forced

to look at the world differently and recognized through my doctoral coursework that life

experiences are shaped by race. Based on my own reflection of my experiences, as well

as information garnered through the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale, I fit well with

Figure 4: Breakdown of WRIAS Percentages for Lee
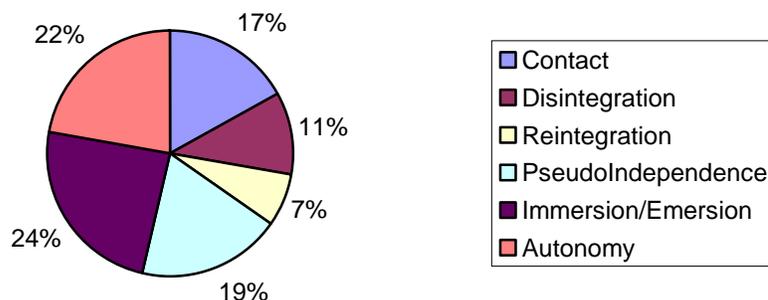
the *Immersion/Emersion* status as defined by Helms and Carter (See Figure 4). One of

the reasons that I embarked upon this study is because I wanted to understand how White

women learn to be better multicultural educators. My goal here is not to help people of

color fit into a White world; rather, in doing this study, I am turning "to Whites to help

them challenge racism" (Carter, 1997, p. 205). Further, when analyzing my approach to

multicultural education, I recognize that I aspire to have the *Education that is*

Multicultural and Reconstructionist approach, as I seek to bring in social action in my

pedagogy, but most of the time my approach tends to be that of the *Multicultural*

Education Approach, as I work to infuse race, gender, and culture into my teaching in an

effort to transform the curriculum (Sleeter, 1996).

Initially, I hypothesized that one must have a moment of rupture in order to

become more of a multicultural educator. For Kristen, Sophia and myself, this is true.

Kristen recognized that her definition of good teaching was limited, Sophia quickly

pointed to the realization that she had been colorblind and how that was not helping her

students, and I learned from my African American classmates that my knowledge about

racism and how it impacts others was incomplete. The three of us find resonance with

multicultural education practices that are within the realms of the *Multicultural Education Approach.* Sarah, on the other hand, had difficulty pinpointing a moment of rupture. She was, however, able to tell me of small tears in the fabric that have led to her current understandings. Sarah's lack of rupture impacts her understandings of multicultural education, and leaves her with an approach to multicultural education that focuses more on sensitivity rather than substance. As Sleeter commented, the approach to multicultural education that Sarah uses is the one with which most Whites find resonance (1996).

Have these women moved beyond a cursory, superficial approach to multicultural education? Yes, they have. Each of these women utilizes an approach to multicultural education that matches definitions that push beyond that of the *Tourist Approach* to multicultural education (Moore & Derman-Sparks, 2003). Does identity play a role in making this move? I believe that it does. The more developed an antiracist identity one seems to have, the more developed the approach to multicultural education one seems to use, as Sarah's approach to multicultural education is the *Human Relations Approach*, and the remaining participants approach is closer to the *Multicultural Education Approach*. Is a rupture to one's identity necessary for such a change to take place? Based on this limited study, I still feel that a rupture of some kind is necessary for a White woman to develop a more antiracist identity and multicultural education practices that are more culturally responsive and antiracist. Sarah's lack of rupture and consequent approach to multicultural education seems to hold with the tendency of many Whites to be the most comfortable with the *Human Relations Approach* to multicultural education (Sleeter, 1996).

I also note within the findings the importance of experiences that are beyond those that one might have as a White woman with limited exposure to race and class. Each one of these women discuss times when they have been in the "minority" in some way. Experiences in schools that are in the inner city seem to have been the most life changing for the participants in terms of gaining understanding about race and social location.

This trend may be an important one to consider for teacher education purposes. Placements of pre-service teachers in settings that are distinctly different from ones that the person knew as a child can begin the process of one becoming multicultural. Such a placement would need to be done carefully, as the shock of a reality that is quite different from the one that is known by the pre-service teacher may cause the person to focus on the deficiencies of the place, rather than on what s/he can learn.

<div align="center">Possibility for Future Study</div>

One aspect that I believe may be important for White female educators to become more multicultural is the opportunity to access the epistemic privilege of people of color in order to inform their understandings about their standpoint and identity. Kristen, Sophia, and I all have experience working in inner city, low socioeconomic status schools. All three of us have had instances where we have learned something about ourselves because of our relationships with people of color. Whiteness, and consequently White privilege is still something that remains invisible to the person who is White unless there is a moment of rupture in their identity that occurs to cause them to think differently. A study similar to this one that distinctly compares White identity between

women who have experience in inner city schools as compared to women who do not is a good possibility for an extension to this study.

Continued Tolling

I finish this study with a sense that it is the first phase of a multifaceted project. Phase one is complete, but I yearn to know more, to talk to other White female elementary educators who have begun their journey beyond a cursory, superficial approach to multicultural education. Based on this limited study, I believe that there are more women out there who have heard the tolling of the bell, and I would love to hear their stories, to piece together what has shaped their standpoint, and to recognize where their actions towards fighting against racism and other forms of oppression have been successful. Further, I want to know how to get more White women to the point of recognizing their White identity, recognizing how their actions in the classroom are political, and recognizing that if they choose to ignore race in their classrooms, they are also choosing to foster oppression.

I began this dissertation with the quote from John Donne, that "no man is an island." Indeed, no one is an island. We are all pieces of the continent. Every time any form of oppression hurts someone, we are diminished. By choosing to ignore the alarm bells in our schools that show that racism continues to shape our educational practices, we are further diminished. As a White elementary educator, I choose to hear the alarm bells and act, to fight against oppression by whatever means I have available. Multicultural education is one of those means. Meanwhile, the bells that signal distinct differences in educational outcome for people of color continue to toll. May more White elementary educators hear their sound and act.

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Appendix A
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY – SUPERINTENDENTS

College of Education

COLLEGE

Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading

DEPARTMENT

Date

Dear _____,

My name is Lee Woodham Digiovanni, and I am a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. My proposed dissertation is entitled *Becoming Multicultural Teachers: An Exploration of Transformation in White Female Elementary Educators.* As I am sure you are well aware, the growing diverse populations in the Metro Atlanta area have helped to highlight a need for multicultural education, while the teaching force, particularly on the elementary level remains primarily white and female. As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in learning about white female elementary educators in the Metropolitan Atlanta area who incorporate multicultural education principles in their curriculum on a daily basis, rather than limiting multicultural education to holiday celebrations, or heroes of particular cultures, to make the curriculum more culturally relevant/responsive. My dissertation purpose is to examine what caused these educators to become more multicultural, as many white elementary teachers do not do more than the heroes and holidays approach to multicultural education.

Names of teachers or schools within your school system were given to me by _____ as potential participants for this research project based on their success with diverse populations and commitment to multicultural education. This letter is to request your permission to contact them for my dissertation research. I will initially be contacting teachers to ask them to fill out a survey and questionnaire. Based on the information obtained from the surveys and questionnaires, I will be conducting one-hour observations in some of the teachers' classrooms to help both the potential participant and me determine if she would like to further participate in my research study. Further participation would entail two to three interviews each lasting approximately one hour at a time and location that is convenient to them. Information obtained from the surveys, questionnaires, and classroom observations will remain confidential, and will be destroyed upon completion of all analyses.

Extensive steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality for all participants. Pseudonyms for teachers' names and the schools where they work will be used in this study to provide anonymity for them. Those who are interviewed will be provided transcripts of all interviews so they can make changes prior to the analysis of data. Teachers will have the

right not to answer questions posed, as well as the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process without penalty.

Enclosed is a copy of the proposed consent document, survey, questionnaire, rubric for observation, and interview questions. Upon completion of the study, I will send a copy of my findings to you at your request.

I appreciate you considering my request to perform this research project. Please sign below to let me know your decision in conducting this research with teachers in your school system and return a copy of this letter to me in the envelope I have provided you at your earliest possible convenience. I would like to begin observing by November 15, 2004.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me, Lee Digiovanni, at   (home),   (cell), or via email at   . You can also contact my supervising professor, Dr. Delores Liston at Georgia Southern University: 912-871-1551.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in my study of how white female elementary educators become multicultural.

Respectfully,

Lee Woodham Digiovanni
Doctoral Candidate, Georgia Southern University

Please sign below and indicate your willingness for selected teachers in your school system to participate in this dissertation research project outlined above, and return in the envelope provided. Keep one copy of this letter for your records.

_____ Yes, you may contact the principals at the schools where the selected teachers work to ask permission for these teachers to participate in this study.

_____ No, you may not contact the principals at the schools where the selected teachers work to ask permission for these teachers to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Superintendent's Signature   Date

Appendix B
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY – PRINCIPALS

College of Education

_____

COLLEGE

Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading

_____

DEPARTMENT

Date

Dear _____,

My name is Lee Woodham Digiovanni, and I am a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. My proposed dissertation is entitled *Becoming Multicultural Teachers: An Exploration of Transformation in White Female Elementary Educators.* As I am sure you are well aware, the growing diverse populations in the Metro Atlanta area have helped to highlight a need for multicultural education, while the teaching force, particularly on the elementary level remains primarily white and female. As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in learning about white female elementary educators in the Metropolitan Atlanta area who incorporate multicultural education principles in their curriculum on a daily basis, rather than limiting multicultural education to holiday celebrations, or heroes of particular cultures, to make the curriculum more culturally relevant/responsive. My dissertation purpose is to examine what caused these educators to become more multicultural, as many white elementary teachers do not do more than the heroes and holidays approach to multicultural education.

Names of teachers at your school were given to me by _____ as potential participants for this research project based on their success with diverse populations and commitment to multicultural education. I have already gained permission from _____, Superintendent of Schools, to contact you regarding this research project. This letter is to request your permission to contact this/these teacher(s) for my dissertation research. I will initially be contacting teachers to ask them to fill out a survey and questionnaire. Based on the information obtained from the surveys and questionnaires, I will be conducting one-hour observations in some of the teachers' classrooms to help both the potential participant and me determine if she would like to further participate in my research study. Further participation would entail two to three interviews each lasting approximately one hour at a time and location that is convenient to them. Information obtained from the surveys, questionnaires, and classroom observations will remain confidential, and will be destroyed upon completion of all analyses.

Extensive steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality for all participants. Pseudonyms for teachers' names and the schools where they work will be used in this study to provide anonymity for them. Those who are interviewed will be provided transcripts of all

interviews so they can make changes prior to the analysis of data. Teachers will have the right not to answer questions posed, as well as the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process without penalty.

Enclosed is a copy of the proposed consent document, survey, questionnaire, rubric for observation, and interview questions. Upon completion of the study, I will send a copy of my findings to you at your request.

I appreciate you considering my request to perform this research project. Please sign below to let me know your decision in conducting this research with teachers in your school system and return a copy of this letter to me in the envelope I have provided you at your earliest possible convenience. I would like to begin observing by November 15, 2004.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me, Lee Digiovanni, at   (home),   (cell), or via email at   .
You can also contact my supervising professor, Dr. Delores Liston at Georgia Southern University: 912-871-1551.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in my study of how white female elementary educators become multicultural.

Respectfully,

Lee Woodham Digiovanni
Doctoral Candidate, Georgia Southern University
Please sign below and indicate your willingness for selected teachers in your school to participate in this dissertation research project outlined above, and return in the envelope provided. Keep one copy of this letter for your records.

_____ Yes, you may contact *teachers' names* at _____ to participate in this study.

_____ No, you may not contact *teachers' names* at _____ to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Principal's Signature   Date

Appendix C
INFORMED CONSENT

College of Education

COLLEGE

Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading

DEPARTMENT

Date

Dear _____,

My name is Lee Woodham Digiovanni, and I am a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. My proposed dissertation is entitled *Becoming Multicultural Teachers: An Exploration of Transformation in White Female Elementary Educators.* As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in learning about white female elementary educators in the Metropolitan Atlanta area who incorporate multicultural education principles in their curriculum on a daily basis, rather than limiting multicultural education to holiday celebrations, or heroes of particular cultures, to make the curriculum more culturally relevant/responsive. My dissertation purpose is to examine what caused these educators to become more multicultural, as many white elementary teachers do not do more than the heroes and holidays approach to multicultural education.

Your name was given to me by _____ as a potential participant for this research project based on your commitment to multicultural education. This letter is to request your assistance in my dissertation research. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form, complete the attached questionnaire and survey and place them in the envelope I have provided. Completion and return of the survey and questionnaire as well as return of one copy of this cover letter will indicate permission to both use the data in the study as well as permission for you to be considered and contacted for remaining aspects of this study. Information obtained from the surveys and questionnaires will remain confidential.

Based on the interpretation of your survey, I may contact you and ask if I can observe in your classroom for approximately one hour. This observation would serve as an opportunity for us to meet and get to know one another as well as help both of us determine if you would like to further participate in this study. Further participation would entail two to three interviews each lasting approximately one hour at a time and location that is convenient to you. Regardless, you will be contacted by me to thank you for your participation in this study. All data

collection for this study will take place between December 7, 2004 and February 17, 2005.

The only risk to you in this study is possibility of identification as a participant. Pseudonyms for your name and the school where you work will be used in this study to provide anonymity for you. If you are among those who are interviewed, transcripts of the interview will be provided to you so any changes that you want prior to the analysis of the data can be made. You have the right not to answer questions posed, as well as the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process without penalty. All results of this research project will be made available to interview participants upon completion. Results of this research project for those who are not interviewed will also be made available upon request.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me, Lee Digiovanni, at   (home),   (cell), or feel free to email me at   . You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Delores Liston, at 912-871-1551 or listond@georgiasouthern.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to Julia Cole at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in my study of how white female elementary educators become multicultural.

Respectfully,

Lee Woodham Digiovanni
Doctoral Candidate, Georgia Southern University

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in this dissertation research project outlined above, and return with your completed survey and questionnaire. Keep one copy of this letter for your records.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

The informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____   _____
Investigator Signature   Date

Appendix D

Becoming Multicultural Teachers: An Exploration of Transformation in White Female Educators
Lee Woodham Digiovanni – Georgia Southern University

Please fill out this questionnaire to help me know more about you as well as how to best contact you. Use the back of this sheet if necessary. Thank you for your time!

Questionnaire:

Participant's Name	
Preferred Address [street, city, and zip code]	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
Cell Phone	
Preferred Email Address	
College(s) attended, degree(s) earned and year degree(s) awarded	
Places you have lived	
Experiences in other countries	
Do you speak any other languages? If so, which one(s)?	

The following questions are required to be asked by any researcher using the WRIAS (included in this packet):

Your Age		Your Ethnicity	
Your Socioeconomic Status		Percentage in your work environment who are same ethnicity as you	

Appendix E

Classroom Observation Rubric [10]

Principles	*Things to Look For*	*Actual observation*
Antiracist	➤ No overt discrimination ➤ Textbooks/Instruction reflects diversity ➤ Safe to talk about racism, sexism, discrimination ➤ Bilingual programs ➤ No ability grouping	
Basic	➤ Diversity of lifestyles acknowledged in some content. ➤ Multicultural content	
Pervasive	➤ More than "heroes and holidays" ➤ Different learning styles ➤ Student diversity acknowledged	
Important for All Students	➤ Languages taught ➤ Curriculum stresses diversity ➤ Teachers involved in overhauling curriculum	
Education for Social Justice	➤ Community service that reflects social concerns – projects that are student driven ➤ Action-oriented/change driven	
Process	➤ Questions include "why", "How," "What if" ➤ Teachers build strong relationships with students and families	
Critical Pedagogy	➤ Questioning of status quo ➤ Dialogue as basis for education ➤ Student experience, language, and culture used as source for learning	

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[10] This rubric includes indicators from "Levels of Multicultural Education," a table from *Affirming Diversity* (Nieto, 2000, pp. 342-343).

Appendix F
Interview Protocol
Guiding Questions

First Interview:

At the beginning of the interview, I will introduce myself and tell where the idea of conducting this project came from… tell a bit of my story –

You have been asked to participate in this study, because you have been identified as a teacher whose use of multiculturalism "goes beyond" heroes and holidays….

1. Describe your early childhood context in terms of diversity and support for the concerns of "diverse" others? Your family? Your neighborhood? Your community?
2. Describe your childhood circumstances in terms of multiculturalism? Is there anything in your background which may have predisposed you to be "more accepting" of diversity" or "more liberal" in your treatment of others? [note: pressure to be "less accepting" could also contribute to a "more accepting" view]
3. On the questionnaire, you mentioned that you had lived _____, are there ways in which your living in ____ influenced your understanding of diversity and/or multiculturalism?
4. You also mentioned that you attended _____ for college. What were some experiences there that shaped you as a person? Did you "hang out" with a diverse group in college?
5. What is your first memory that has to do with diversity? Why do you think that memory stood out to you?
6. According to the literature I have read, some people experience a "moment of rupture" (a break from previously held notions) regarding issues of race or diversity. Have you had an experience like this? If so, please tell me about it.

Second Interview:
1. At our first interview, we discussed some experiences that you have had with diversity. What experiences did you have that helped you develop multicultural understandings? How have these experiences impacted your teaching?
2. What are your goals as a multicultural educator? That is, what do you hope children will "take from" your classroom in terms of multiculturalism? As you developed multicultural understandings, what did you notice about your own teaching practices?
3. What does multicultural education look like in your classroom? Describe a few of your favorite activities? In what ways is "diversity" embedded in your teaching?
4. What did you learn about racism as you have become more culturally aware?
5. Who are the people that have helped you the most in assessing your teaching practices? Why?