

THE PRACTICES OF CRITICALLY CONSCIOUS TEACHERS; EXPLORING THE ROLES  
OF LIVED EXPERIENCE, TEACHER PREPARATION AND WORKING CONTEXTS

BY

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## **Abstract**

Proposing the potential for grassroots reform of schools by teachers, the researcher explores the most salient component of critical consciousness: the ability for people to understand their social placement based on their culture and economic status and to use that understanding to make changes in the world. To better understand teachers' awareness of and response to the phenomenon of social placement, and how it relates to schooling, the researcher conducts case studies of two teachers known for their success with children from historically marginalized populations. Using interviews of participants, their students, classroom observation, and collected documents, the researcher conducts inquiry into participants' lived experience, classroom practices, and students' voices. These enable the researcher to explore a deeper understanding of the tensions and complexity inherent in teaching for change.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate my work to my family, Sara-Aubrey and Christopher Erikson, Michael and Kalika Shapiro. Thank you for your unlimited patience and love.

To my late grandmother, Helen Trzcinski : Thank you, Gram, for always believing in me.

To my father, Edward Boros, Jr.: Thank you, Dad, for introducing me to the world of literature and self-learning. The wonder persists.

Finally, in honor of the memory of my former husband of twenty-five years and dear friend, Dale L. Erikson, who passed out of my life during the writing of this dissertation: You would have been so proud, Honey.

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## Chapter 1

### **Teachers and the Phenomenon of Social Placement of Themselves and Their Marginalized Students**

Having been educated as an urban teacher, I have held various roles in the field of urban education. One of my responsibilities was the administration of the *Star Teacher Selection Interview*. This screening instrument was developed by Martin Haberman in 1963, to identify and select urban teacher education candidates who possess characteristics believed to be significant for the effective teaching of students in poverty. This selection protocol is most commonly used in teacher education programs that have a commitment to preparing teachers to teach in urban schools of historically underserved populations.

This screening instrument is atypical, and the questions are unanticipated by most interviewees. The Star Teacher Interview is a scenario-based interview designed to predict which teachers would succeed and stay with at-risk youth, and which would fail or leave (Haberman Foundation, 1994, p. 26). The questions are intentionally developed to elicit responses that enable the trained interviewer to determine the interviewees' functions in seven areas: persistence, response to authority, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal/professional orientation, burn-out and fallibility. I am trained and certified by the Haberman Educational Foundation to administer the screening and analyze results of the interview through a well-defined rating protocol.

Over the years, the interview process intrigued me as a number of individuals' responses were unconventional, yet thoughtful and provocative. Furthermore many of what I coin as "mavericks" scored high on the rating scale, and were subsequently admitted to the teacher education programs in which I worked.

In the coursework the mavericks thought outside of the box, and drew strongly on their life experiences to bring meaning to the materials utilized in the program. They had strong opinions about teaching and schools and could support their opinions with examples from their lived experience. After using the state learner standards, they began to question the curriculum, and the often biased information they were mandated to teach. They thought of creative ways to bring multiple viewpoints to their future students and how to make the curriculum relevant and engaging.

In the classroom, the mavericks developed strategies specific to the needs and interests of their students. Although many of them were successful in raising student test scores, they also initiated community-based projects which necessitated students to utilize habits of mind. Further, they engaged their students in community issues, and challenged students to articulate, collect information, debate and act on these issues. They critiqued mandated curriculum, textbooks, media, and society at large.

I taught in several programs using Haberman's Star Teacher Protocol. I found interactions with these particular students to be refreshing. They were interesting, with perspectives acquired from varied experiences and backgrounds. The composition of the classes seemed unique. There were more African Americans and Latinos enrolled than Caucasians. Many of the teacher candidates had grown up in impoverished communities and were educated in urban schools. These individuals possessed varied cultural and class experiences. There were more men in these programs than one usually finds in teacher education, and many had served in the armed services and traveled overseas. The variety of careers represented—television producer, police officer, minister, criminal prosecutor, advertising consultant, actress, attorney, health professional—added another dimension to the university programs.

All of the candidates in the specified programs already held a Baccalaureate degree from a four year college or university. Additionally, there was broad variation in the ages of candidates. Their commitment to teaching seemed deeper, as demonstrated by high retention scores in these programs, and candidates' willingness to serve in high needs communities. The diversity of ethnicity, culture, class, age and former careers resulted in cohorts with richer, denser life experiences.

It was over several iterations of teaching cohorts of these unconventional teacher candidates that I began to seriously consider the possibility of this breed of teacher as an agent of change. Indeed, I observed several former teaching candidates ascend into positions of power as principals, deans and even directors of their teaching programs.

### **Education Reform**

Few U.S. citizens would disagree that schools are currently in need of reform. Yet, probe further and you are likely to find a wide range of responses as to what exactly needs to be reformed. Innumerable attempts at education reform have failed largely due to the way in which problems plaguing education have been defined, and how reformers have gone about attempting to solve them. Complex issues such as purported goals of public education, inequity in funding schools, and the context of a hegemonized social system are reduced to mere technical problems (Carr & Kemmis, 2000). The perceived panacea, including standardized curriculum, scripted instruction and mandated testing, have had significantly little impact on improving education in the United States. In fact, in the FY2005 Performance and Accountability Report, the only success the Federal Government could claim was an improvement in reading achievement for

nine year olds, an ambiguous assertion bereft of readily accessible details (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

The state of education needs to be improved for all children, but a rigorous, relevant and equitable education is crucial for marginalized children. Little has been done to meet that end, but even less has been accomplished in improving the daily lives and futures of these children. A look at public schooling in America today reveals a rupture between democratic ideals and reality (Giroux, 2000). Nowhere is the chasm more apparent than in high-needs schools where the struggle of marginalized populations endures. Fifty years after the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, one of the wealthiest nations on earth still retains a form of apartheid schooling (Kozol, 2006; Orfield, 2003).

Urban schooling is complicated and problematic. However, reformers continue to address the symptoms of the problems rather than wrestle with the complexity. Thus research continues to focus on low student performance, disengaged students, unqualified teachers, a tiered system and material conditions. Ignored are the larger social issues regarding what constitutes knowledge, whose histories are privileged and how education serves the dominant culture by reifying the existing placement of individuals in a hierarchical classed system (Anyon, 2005).

The failure of school reform to significantly transform urban schooling over the past decade is due, in part, to the tendency to see all educational issues as technical in nature (Carr & Kemmis, 2000; Giroux, 2001). A case in point is the misguided policy of the prior and current administrations in the form of *No Child Left Behind*. Unfortunately, the positivist approach to educational theory has become increasingly prevalent as the politicians and administration reject alternative approaches to framing educational issues. Missing in the reform discourse is the larger view: the social context of U.S. education within a globalized world (Aronowitz, 2001).

Instead, today's administration is encouraging privatization of education (Giroux, 2000). This practice could result in the elimination of one of the last public institutions left. Privatization ensures that corporate elites will control the curriculum enabling them to assert their power and privilege over our children's futures (Underwood, 2012).

Although it is said that consciousness defines reality, reality has a way of systematically distorting consciousness (Carr & Kemmis, 2000). It is for this reason that the present crisis in education requires a much more critical lens, a lens that reveals how deeply ingrained ideologies are enabling the production of a type of schooling that is essentially anti-democratic (Aronowitz, 2001).

An approach to educational theory based on rejection of a more positivist frame in favor of a more transformative one, would mandate certain requirements. It would need to reject notions of rationality, objectivity and absolute truth. It would need to elicit, accept, and employ interpretative categories from teachers while providing ways of distinguishing ideologically distorted interpretations from those that are not. This type of educational theory would identify and expose those aspects of the existing social order which deter the pursuit of rational goals while offering theoretical accounts which make teachers aware of how to eradicate them. In other words, this educational theory would be oriented toward transforming the situations which impede the achievement of educational goals, perpetuate ideological distortions, and obstruct rational and critical work in educational situations (Carr & Kemmis, 2000; Giroux, 2006).

Uniting new views of knowledge with the notion of history as an emerging, open-ended phenomenon, critical theory provides a way for educators to analyze the discontinuities and tensions in education. This enables them to emphasize the significance of human agency and struggle in the past, reveal it in the present, and envision what society could be (Giroux, 2001).

I believe teachers could be at the heart of powerful, grassroots educational reform. They are necessary in analyzing history and emphasizing human agency and struggle. Fine and Weis (2003) agree, stating their belief “that the future of public education as an intellectual project of serious critical engagement lies in the hands of educators.” However, most teachers are not prepared for an endeavor of this magnitude. In my 30 years in the field of education, I have met few teachers who could identify their own placement in society, let alone those of their students (Giroux, 2006). By identifying one’s placement, I mean in part, recognizing one’s status which is imposed by external forces or assumed through one’s privilege.

Most teachers are being kept busy emphasizing the basic skills necessary for their students to pass mandated tests (Fairtest, 2007). If understanding and engaging human agency and struggle are not part of the curriculum, these concepts are unlikely to be addressed. In fact, the teachers most wedded to a curriculum that reproduces inequity in society are often those teaching the most impoverished and marginalized students (Haberman, 1996). A well-critiqued view of knowledge, combined with new notions of history, is lost on teachers indoctrinated to believe in the basic good will of our social system and educated to maintain the status quo.

Our current situation requires teachers who are deeply sensitive to the sociopolitical and economic environment in which we are educating our children (Gay, 2003). Teachers need the capacity to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions that have given rise to schools as the sites of social reproduction. They need the ability to critique curriculum, textbooks, and schooling processes, and engender those same skills in their students. These teachers need the courage and skill to challenge the dominant educational discourse and engage in dialogue with their students (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003).

Where does one go to find teachers who have the capacity to critique a classed and racialized social system and link its perpetuation to public education? Where are the teachers who will navigate the mandated curriculum in a way that enables students' engagement in dialogue about the historical struggle of their people? Where can one find a teacher who measures her students' success not only on narrow standardized tests, but in terms of their sense of agency, positive self-identity and resolve to act toward a new, more equitable society (Haberman, 2005)? Indeed there are those who contend that there is a shortage of teachers in general (Ingersoll, 2002), let alone teachers who can be critical of society.

I see promise in the Maverick teachers, the type of teacher candidates who might be identified by the Haberman Interview. As teachers, they seem to possess attributes that enable them to see transparent realities and dispositions that provoke them to question the status quo. I believe that these individuals have insights into social placement, at least an awareness of the problem. This awareness is a mini step toward what Paulo Freire calls *conscientização* or critical consciousness (Freire, 1974).

Critical consciousness is a term used to describe the concept of the awareness of one's placement in society and the implications of being placed (Swartz, 2004). Simultaneously, it engages notions of struggle, change and transcendence of imposed placement (Freire, 2002). Teachers who have an increased awareness of power relations in society are less likely to teach exclusively to standardized tests. They may perceive mandated testing as a tool used by bureaucrats and dominant forces in society to maintain the status quo with its inherent privilege. These teachers understand that by testing solely for knowledge that focuses on discrete bytes of random information, that is knowledge purged of information on cultures that have been marginalized, critical thinking skills, unbiased historical records, and sensible options as

answers, they are not educating their students in ways that lead to equal access. Additionally, teaching the knowledge favored by the assessment developers and their patrons, insures that most of the education of marginalized students will be preoccupied with learning a highly biased curriculum with the possible exclusion of learning skills such as problem solving, self-efficacy and other processes that are likely to be more essential for success in the current social environment.

Teachers who understand the concept of social placement are cognizant of their students' need to compete for jobs in the social arena, and are, therefore, reluctant to dismiss the curriculum of the dominant culture. They seem to strike a balance. Mandated curriculum may be supplemented with additional materials that provide students with alternative views of a purely revisionist history. Activities that enable students to see that history is socially constructed and continually changing in light of new discoveries or trade books offering alternatives to the conservative, traditional accounts of historical events are some of many ways that offer a more pluralistic and encompassing historical discourse.

For example, the disciplines may become more accessible by being taught through culturally relevant perspectives. The use of hip-hop in English classes, oral histories of community members in history, data collection related to neighborhood issues in mathematics—these are more meaningful experiences for marginalized populations. Through these activities, the western canon may be exposed as merely a white European view in a world of multiple lenses.

Critically aware teachers are informed of the skill sets required by the dominant culture, the ones that are necessary for success in today's socioeconomic climate. However, they are also keenly aware of crucial elements generally disregarded in most high-needs schools. Equally

important to students' success is a sense of resilience, self-efficacy, positive self-identity, critical awareness and social capital (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Lauria & Miron, 2005; Michie, 1999; Michie, 2005; Miron, 1996; Tatum, 1997). These are the skills that enable individuals to advocate for themselves, to challenge the ideology of the dominant and privileged. Developing these capabilities in young individuals aids them in breaking through the invisible barriers of institutionalized racism.

I locate my study, both literally and figuratively, in classrooms because that is where I am most at home, and that is where I believe the battle for reform should be waged. More specifically, my study takes place in the classrooms of two teachers who teach marginalized students. My study is an exploration into the practices of these teachers who have been acknowledged for their success in teaching these specific populations. Additionally, I am seeking evidence of the teachers' awareness of social status, a characteristic that aligns with Freire's (1974) notion of *conscientização* or critical consciousness, and the precursor to action on social placement.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework and Related Literature Review

The use of critical theory enables the problematization of society as it now exists, dominated by the confluence of whiteness and socio-economic stature. This dominant class has historically, and continues to, impose a system of social stratification which maintains those in power at the highest tier, and those of color and poverty at the bottom (Giroux, 2001).

School is an institution that serves the dominant culture by maintaining hegemony over marginalized populations. It does so with a double thrust. First, society withholds resources to schools populated by the non-dominant culture. Second, the infrastructure of School insures maintenance of the imposed placement of individuals through curricula, practices and a stream of norm-based, high-stakes testing.

There is little or no will by the upper class of our society to significantly reform the existing system which works to its advantage. Therefore, genuine reform, or disruption to this system must come from the oppressed and their allies. This requires a thorough understanding of historical and current forces responsible for social placement. It also necessitates a yearning for rectification of the status quo, and a deep desire for new models of Public Education grounded in social justice.

My study is an exploration of teachers' conceptualization of one's placement in society and how that position is assigned by the social system (Freire, 1974). The notion also gives consideration to action, resistance, and historical struggle. More specifically, this study is my entry into this domain, as I question the potential for critical consciousness in two urban educators and their practices. I begin my literature review with the cited conversation between Donald Macedo and Howard Zinn (2004) because it provides the premise for my study.

Macedo: The paradox for me is why . . . are politicians who truly want to create conditions for the actual practice of democracy along the lines proposed by the Declaration of Independence hardly taken seriously? . . . In our conversation today I would like to hear what you have to say regarding the role that schools play in creating this paradox and the mechanisms schools use to maintain it so as to reproduce dominant values that, ultimately, work counter to the very democratic ideals that schools seemingly promote. Do you see the contradiction?

Zinn: It's interesting. In a way the educational system, the schools, prepare young people to live with those contradictions and to accept them and to think they're okay. (pp. 28-29)

Most Americans have come to accept the agenda and practices of the institution of schooling in the U.S. as normative. This citation accomplishes one of my objectives. It brings together the notions of the current political and social environment in which we live and their relationship to, and reliance on, education. In other words, it makes problematic the contexts within which education resides, while it accuses the system of education for the reproduction of the problems. In this study I invoke critical theory which enables me to problematize rather than problem solve. I highlight two cases of educators who attempt to disrupt the cycle of socially-institutionalized schooling.

### **The Social Context**

We live today in a society that is overwhelmingly dichotomous. On one hand we promote high ideals, ethics and democratic values. On the other hand democratic values are promoted only to the extent to which they advance a globalized capitalist marketplace (Giroux, 2006). The politics in maintaining an upper hand in the local and global market is often ruthless, and in direct opposition to democracy. The policies necessary to sustain U.S. capitalism globally have serious repercussions internationally and at home (Brosio, 1994). These have been exacerbated with the market crash of 2008.

Postmodernism is an attitude toward our social world in this stage of its history (Schwandt, 2001, p. 221). It is characterized by its distrust of “essentializing metanarratives,” or abstract theoretical frameworks that purport to explain culture, society and human agency. Rather, it embraces heterogeneity, difference, fragmentation and indeterminacy, and resists notions of absolutism or one universal truth. A postmodern society aligns itself with post-colonial theory.

That is, it seeks to bring those who have been pushed to society’s margins, due to working class status or being racialized as non-white and therefore deviant, to the center. It seeks to open up a more plural, inclusive mixture of worldviews (Giroux, 2005; Ward, 2003). In this way postmodernism holds potential for opening new spaces of ethnic identity. It enables a strategic shaping of a sense of individual and collective self (Miron, 1996).

It is against this dichotomous background that individuals continue to struggle for an educational reform that is both liberating and democratic. Although ideas on reform abound, few of these address the real problem inherent in low-functioning schools: a society where the dominant culture maintains a system of inequality. School reform will succeed only if it is part of broader social reform. In the U.S.A.’s market economy, equitable school reform is unlikely to be addressed any time soon (Wood, 2000). The challenge facing the next century, according to Alex Molnar (1996), is to regain control of our lives from the market. Eight years later, this appears to be a nearly insurmountable undertaking.

The argument seems circular, framing school as a place where reproduction of societal problems occurs (Zinn & Macedo, 2005). However, this perspective enables one to also frame schools as the place where the reproduction of social ills could be disrupted. In order to have a citizenry capable of taking on the market, we need to rigorously educate all future citizens to

take a critically informed part in rebuilding a national and international market economy that is foremost democratic (Giroux, 2006).

The term *urban schooling* is used to represent an indiscriminate notion of education in an urban environment, and does not presume uniformity of services and resources among urban schools. However, the expression is frequently used to refer to school systems in areas characterized by a high level of poverty and the predominance of non-Anglo students. In reality, urban schools may be located in affluent areas of the city that bear little resemblance to the ones located in less desirable neighborhoods, such as behind stockyards or heavily industrialized areas where less expensive housing is available. On the other hand, there are *suburban* school systems that closely resemble those found in urban areas of poverty. For the purpose of this paper, the term *urban* will be used to represent communities characterized by the convergence of high levels of poverty and a predominantly non-Anglo population, in either the city or the suburbs.

In addition, the use of the word *schooling*, rather than *education*, demonstrates consideration for the variance in the practices and experiences available to students of urban school systems. This care in word selection suggests that one should not necessarily presume these schools provide an education (or at least the equivalence of an education by state standards) for their students. Additionally, the term *schooling* also infers processes such as “deculturation,” negative identity formation, and preparation for life in a “classed” system (Valenzuela, 1999). This process deflects attention from the real issues and sources of oppressive schooling practices.

To begin to fathom the complexity and problematic nature of urban schooling, one must consider more than the perception provided by mainstream media. Their narrow focus on inequities in funding, presents the problem as one that can easily be resolved through increased

monetary funds. This type of thinking is both shortsighted and dangerous. It ignores issues that threaten the foundation of the democratic principles on which our nation was built. The most recent crisis of the mass privatization of schools is a bipartisan effort to take one of the last democratic institutions and place it into the hands of the elites (Ravitch, 2010).

Ominously omitted in the discourse surrounding urban education today, is the original intent of public education in the United States: to advance democracy, which was formed in the interest of balancing the tensions between self-realization and the common good (Goodlad, 1997). A society invests in its schools to protect them from the erosion of their public purpose—that is, “the educating of persons committed to a society that nurtures its members.” The contextual surround shapes the educational process. Both the political and social contexts are critical (Rose, 2009). The context for American schools, according to Goodlad, should be a democratic one,

not a half-formed democracy of slogans and rituals, but a work in progress that continuously explores “how more people can live with a sense of empowered participation.” The core idea, exceedingly complex, but deceptively simple in appearance, is that democracy in progress must be continuously self-conscious to the degree to which it is safe for education in its fostering of decency, civility, justice, freedom, and caring. Such fostering is not the responsibility nor within the capability of schools alone. (1997, p. 23)

Urban schooling not only fails to provide an education that enables participation in a democratic system, but prevents its underserved students from achieving the ability to participate in democracy. It neither teaches the students the skills prerequisite to entrance into high-powered careers and positions in society, nor does it enable them to critique the structures that blame them for not succeeding. It ensures, through a mandated curriculum that time spent in these schools will not be spent on developing critical thinking, problem solving, self-efficacy, positive identity

or any empowering pedagogy. Urban school time is consumed with the presentation of basic skills that are dumbed down and repetitive (Gatto, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999).

In the last decade, attention to standards to the exclusion of other pedagogically significant practices has resulted in a return to a technocratic way of teaching. The creation of standards is wrought with politics as special interest groups (including big business in the form of The Business Roundtables, and other powerful contingencies) clamor to get their ideals on the agenda called curriculum (Miron, 1996). The standards are put in the hands of every teacher who must insure that her students are intimately familiar with discrete “bytes” of knowledge.

In an effort to supervise the process and guarantee that all students are being appropriately socialized in the dominant discourse, high stakes tests are administered. These tests largely determine a student’s future, and aid the system in sorting students into categories that will track them through school. One can virtually trace the trajectory of these students. Those in districts with greater per-pupil expenditure are most likely to score high on the tests and eventually attend college. Students in urban districts with lower rates of per-pupil spending are most likely to fail the tests, repeat grade levels, drop out of school, and end up in low-paying jobs (Kohn, 1991).

Even well-intentioned teachers are coerced to raise test scores on standardized tests by the implementation of a system that is reliant on test preparation materials purchased from the publishers of the tests. Tests are biased toward the knowledge produced by the dominant discourse and common among dominant white society. This knowledge privileges the experiences of the conquerors and ignores contributions of those conquered (Chomsky, 1997; Karp, 1991; Kohn, 1999; McCarthy & McMillian, 2003; Takaki, 1994; Zinn & Macedo, 2005).

There are numerous variables that play into the social and political construction of urban public schooling. As I stated earlier, to think of urban school reform primarily in terms of a funding issue is overly simplistic. The communities in which these schools exist are marked by poverty (Coles, 2012; Anyon, 2005). There is no significant tax base in these communities to contribute to the schools. This is a socioeconomic issue of historical dimension and I address it further in the next section of this dissertation. For now, consider how postmodern socioeconomics, globalization, has further threatened people living in poverty abroad and at home. Here, the impact is greatest on people who have traditionally been underserved (Giroux, 2001).

Therefore, it stands to reason that schools in the poorest neighborhoods have insufficient resources, little or no teaching supplies, run-down buildings, and the inability to maintain well-trained administrators (Kozol, 1991). In the urban districts, it is difficult to find teachers who will work under the stated conditions. These districts are forced to hire teachers who have difficulty finding employment in more affluent schools. Many of the teachers who teach in these districts are unprepared to teach students who are culturally different from themselves (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These problems contribute to the high attrition rate of teachers in urban schools.

Because these student populations are composed of marginalized people, they are less likely to have adequate health care and more likely to speak English as their second language (Kozol, 1991). Services normally available to communities such as grocery stores, libraries, park district programs, are nonexistent in many of these areas. Most of the students are on a free lunch program which, in some instances, provides their only daily meal (Kozol, 1991).

Educators often refer to these students as “at risk,” a term that denotes deficit thinking. They are overlooked, underserved and misrepresented (Irvine, 2003). They need teachers who understand them and the social and cultural contexts in which they live. They need teachers who are aware of the sociopolitical and economic premises responsible for their schooling. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine (2003) maintains that it takes more than caring, competent teachers to unpack the complexity of teaching in an urban, culturally diverse school.

### **Critical Theory**

The Frankfurt School’s theory of culture, offers an opportunity to interrogate the role of schools in social and cultural reproduction. With “culture” at its center, critical theory can provide tools for educators to use in enabling their students to explore society’s role in their self-formation. Miron (1996) discusses ethnic identity as a social process, much like other social realities. He reasserts Wexler’s belief that a student’s most important labor is identity work. Students work in school is to “become somebody,” to establish a “credible identity” (Wexler, 1992, p. 302). Critical theory enables students to see how their placement in a hierarchical social system is imposed upon them.

Although critical theory does not provide a map by which to view the world, it helps one to design questions and strategies for exploring it (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). A critical theory of education can lead to a dynamic form of radical pedagogy. Revisiting the crisis of urban education from a critical theory perspective enables one to ask the questions that illuminate and reveal sociopolitical and economic forces at work in the construction of urban schooling. By using a critical lens to critique the contexts of urban schooling, the social, political, and economic impacts on urban education become apparent.

Besides its ability to provide a theory of the present and a historical account of the formation of the current society, critical theory draws upon multiple disciplines and combines theoretical with empirical research. Since capitalism continues to be a major constitutive force in contemporary society, the Marxian theory and critique of capitalism continues to be a crucial element of a critical theory of society, and therefore schools (Best & Kellner, 1991; Held, 1980).

A reconceptualized critical theory questions the assumption that society is unproblematically democratic and free, when in fact society has been acculturated to feel comfortable in relations of domination and subordination, rather than equality and independence (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). As school is the site of reproduction and maintenance of the social order, this critique is especially relevant.

Critical theory enables critiques of privileged groups who have a stake in supporting the status quo to protect their own interests. It recognizes the role of new information systems and media saturation, or “hyperreality,” that aid the privileged, and reconstitute the self-formation of the individual. Schools, once protected from blatant attempts to promote corporate interests, are now one of the sites where it is most prevalent. Students are viewed as potentially life-long consumers, and are passive victims of a barrage of advertising at both the subliminal and conscious level (Giroux, 2000, p. 94; Giroux & Pollock, 2010).

Today “per pupil expenditure” is determined by property taxes. Thus in areas of poverty where housing is inexpensive, there is a lower tax base upon which the schools can draw. Therefore “per pupil expenditure” can be as little as half of what the wealthier areas spend on their students. In addition “intellectual-property” in the form of curricular offerings is richer and more diverse in the white privileged schools, while it remains basic and skeletal in the schools serving the poor. Resources that support learning are abundant in wealthy areas and lacking in

poor ones. The notion of property remains at the roots of institutionalized racism. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1985).

Poverty deeply affects the educational experience of children of color. This is not a coincidence. Poverty is symptomatic of deeply ingrained institutionalized racism (Anyon, 2005). Authentic school reform needs to strike at the roots of the institution of schooling in order to break the cycle of the reproduction of a racist society and governing system. The institutionalization of racism impacts urban schooling in significant ways (Berliner, 2005).

The use of critical theory as a construct for examining schooling, forces one to look beyond technical problems. It questions the social and political neutrality of school curriculum and practices. It reveals schools as social sites with both overt, formal curriculum, as well as covert, informal curriculum. This hidden curriculum is the nonacademic, but educationally significant consequences of schooling. It is tacit, but systematic, and relates to the control function of schooling. It can be observed in the beliefs and values that are implicitly transmitted through the social relations and routines that compose the schooling experience (Vallance, 1973; Giroux, 2001; English, 2010).

Although some theorists believe the hidden curriculum to be benign in that it has little or no impact on the future of students, it works to maintain the existing society through socialization processes that reproduce society's inequities as well. The values and beliefs of the dominant middle class, Anglo culture are normalized, then transmitted through specific classroom practices. The ideologies of the dominant culture remain uncontested, as do issues of class, gender and racialized and marginalized groups.

The hidden curriculum also serves to privilege certain types of knowledge. Evident in E. D. Hirsch's work (1988), a revisionist version of history and knowledge deemed crucial to the

white, western European tradition, takes precedent. Thus students of ethnic and racialized backgrounds learn quickly that their people do not figure into the historical record in any significant way.

On one level, one might wonder why a child in an urban school would exert any effort whatsoever. He is already trapped in a cycle with few chances of escape. Take the case of Chicago. A school with low test scores is punished by being put on a watch list, and if low scores continue, the school is reconstituted. That means that the entire staff is dismissed and, if they are fortunate, dispersed to other sites. An entire new staff is hired. One can immediately see that this testing is high stakes for teachers, too. Therefore teachers engage in what is called “teaching to the test.” This practice virtually insures that urban students will be spoon-fed discrete skills to the exclusion of critical thinking, problem-solving or project-based learning (Berliner & Nichols, 2007). So even if an urban student does well on the test, he is not likely to be able to compete with his suburban peers who have been prepared for life through administration of an enriched curriculum and pedagogy.

A closer look at the testing phenomenon reveals other information. Children who have failed the test are mandated to attend summer school in order to be promoted to the next grade level (Moore, 2000). The summer school program is a more intensive form of the type of schooling that the child has experienced throughout the school year. This means that teaching is scripted direct instruction, and that every teacher in the district must be on the same page at the same time, regardless of the page her students have left off on.

So here is a problem. Students of ethnic, racialized, or low income backgrounds are forced to learn discrete knowledge that has little relevance for them, and which, in fact, ignores their cultures and contributions. If they learn it well they will be issued a diploma that will be

practically useless when compared to a diploma from a school located in the wealthier suburbs. If these students fail the test, they will not receive a diploma, making it difficult for them to find employment. This means that they will be forced to find alternatives to mainstream jobs. This has significant impact on their future life circumstances.

Although a critical theory of education provides us with the wherewithal to interrogate and uncover, exposing reality is not enough. We need to respond to these disclosures in ways that empower and provide agency to our urban students. This has significant implications for the field of teacher education. With a body of preservice teachers composed of mainly white, middle-class females, teacher educators need to focus on ways to engage our students in confronting their own whiteness, class, and other privileged statuses. Borrowing from Peggy McIntosh's work (1990), preservice teachers should understand that they belong to a culture, and begin to identify and interrogate it. With this in mind, teacher educators may need to become models of social activism and embrace radical pedagogy while providing safe spaces for varying students' identity exploration (Giroux, 2006).

As preservice teachers work on their own issues of cultural identity, their "whiteness" and "privilege" (Cooper, 2003; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001), they need to thoroughly understand the formation of identity that takes place in urban schooling. At the same time they need to be given the tools to disclose and disrupt the hidden agenda in the curriculum that reproduces roles in society and shapes the ways in which individuals come to see their place in the social order.

If we care about more than simply access to an unequal system, teacher educators will need to make this type of teaching the norm. We, as teacher educators, also need to model the kind of courage and risk-taking that our teaching students will need when they face the bundle of

assumptions called curriculum, and the teachers and administrators who unreflectively implement those assumptions.

### **Critical Consciousness**

According to Cornel West, critical consciousness is perhaps the most important insight an educator can develop in students (Teachers College News, 2004). This awareness extends to status based on culture, racialization, economic and intellectual capital, and power. Critical consciousness is the awareness of your imposed placement in the social world, and that of others. Politics is always about placement.

Swartz (2004) asserts that perception is crucial for understanding just how critical consciousness works. The concept integrates language, community, memory and history. Freire & Macedo's (1993) conceptualization of critical consciousness interlocks social identity with power. They argue that a vital precondition for positive behavioral change by marginalized groups is the development of critical consciousness, or the development of understandings of the way in which intentional social conditions have fostered peoples' situations of disadvantage (Campbell, & MacPhail, 2002).

Freire (1974, p. 14) claims that life situations characterized by oppression lead to the development of adapted consciousness, a state in which an individual accommodates to conditions imposed upon him. In this state people have little ability to conceive of alternatives to existing social relations, let alone to challenge them. I argue that this is one of the responsibilities of educators: to teach their students about imposed placement and assist in positioning them to challenge it.

We need to keep in mind that individuals living a life of racialization and poverty are not living that way due to a preference for that life style. As mentioned in the literature review, placement in society is imposed. For this reason, we cannot separate urban schooling from its societal context. They are inextricably linked. What we can do is make that link visible to the oppressed, then assist them in learning self-advocacy skills. This is perhaps the most powerful reform effort.

It is my theory that this notion of moving from awareness to action is the most realistic type of reform. This should be the mission of education, and it should be led by teachers in solidarity with community, informed by critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical consciousness.

My research focuses on two teachers and their practices. Both serve in urban schools, and may possess attributes related to critical consciousness, specifically understanding of their own social placement, and that of their students. I explore the teachers' lived experiences in an attempt to see if and how lived experience may have informed their understanding of imposed placement. I seek their personal perspectives on their teacher education programs to explore any possible link of their education programs in forming their perceptions on externally-imposed placement. My study is just an entry into the area of teachers as change agents, an initial explorative endeavor based on intuition and observation.

Within a democracy, I argue, an important goal of urban education is the development of racialized and classed students' critical awareness of their socially imposed placement. It should occur through the development of insight into the way in which their racialized and classed status is constructed, and the impact that the constructed status has on their everyday lives. Embedded in the concept of critical consciousness is action. When a level of consciousness of

the oppressed situation is raised, then the next step is the transformative step-action. When this occurs one is believed to possess critical consciousness and the empowerment to disrupt one's own oppression (Freire, 2002).

In this study I do not attempt to label critically conscious teachers. Rather, I am interested in my participants' awareness of their own and their students' social placement, and the conditions under which it has been constructed. Additionally I explore if and how it plays out in participants' practices. I reiterate, this is a precursor to the action component of critical consciousness.

If we continue to depend on educational reform led by a government that has sold out to the corporate elites, it will not happen. I believe that the last and best resort to a vibrant, lasting educational reform has to come from within the schools themselves. Teacher education programs which reach out to and serve diverse populations are one way for schools to elicit bright, mature teacher candidates.

Through my research I hope to portray the ways in which two teachers in high-needs schools navigate issues of placement with their students. It opens up areas for deeper interrogation, and leads to questions regarding teachers' capacity to reinvent schools from the inside out. It also leaves us wondering if developing strong civic-minded students with an acute awareness of social stratification and their placement in a stratified society is enough to bring about the type of grassroots change our education system so desperately needs.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This is a qualitative study that seeks to provide a rich, complex account of teachers who are attempting to embody their own sense of critical consciousness in their classrooms (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schram, 2003). The use of case study allows me to capture complexity, attend to details, and provide more specificity. I also selected case study and narrative form for the sense of participation and advocacy it presents to the participants and me (Noddings, 1986; Stake, 1995). Each case is unique, yet with enough detail with which teachers can resonate (Stake, 1995), and this is the beauty of this particular method. Each of my two participants, and the context within which each teaches, composes a case.

Treating each teacher as an individual case permits me to view the teacher holistically, and to consider his unique context. This method releases me from the checklist approach to collecting more generalized data. The case study allows narrative and context to play central roles. This component of my methodology is very important as I seek to privilege the teacher-participant's voice. A qualitative researcher perceives what occurs in his study and chooses to represent it with stories or narratives. This method engages the reader in an experiential understanding of the case. Stake (1995) discusses one of the roles of a case researcher as "researcher as biographer." In this undertaking I prefer that the teacher-participant tell his or her own story, and I present them as narratives (Riessman, 1993). This is significant for a number of reasons, foremost being that my study can inform me and the teacher participant about his practice. It is for this reason that I consider the teacher as a "participant" in the study.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000), the educational importance of narrative inquiry is that it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived. “This understanding of the negotiation of entry highlights the way narrative inquiry occurs within relationships among researchers and practitioners, constructed as a caring community” (p. 73).

I feel that this is of particular significance to my study as the lived experience of a teacher prior to teaching has an impact on his view of teaching, and subsequently his life in the role of “teacher.” Additionally, the teachers I studied were participants, not mere subjects. They were both involved in my observations and perceptions of what I had observed.

Noddings (1986), emphasizes the collaborative nature of research as being a process in which all participants see themselves as participants in the community. This, she claims, has value for researcher, practitioner, theory and practice. This was my preference for conducting research of a teacher, by requesting the teacher to participate in a study. Thus, viewing my participants as fellow researchers, enabled me to use their definitions of their classroom practice during my observations. I prioritized their narratives in the research, and conducted member checks to insure that what I recorded and wrote was accurate.

## **Procedures**

**Recruiting participants.** I was aware from the outset that finding participants who fit my narrow criteria and were willing and able to participate in the study was going to be problematic. What many consider “good” teaching is still teaching to maintain the status quo. I was seeking a different type of teacher, the kind of teacher that might disrupt the status quo.

I was seeking candidates with a specific attribute of critical consciousness, that is an understanding of their own and their students' social placement. Teachers possessing this knowledge are aware of the role that schooling and society play in marginalized placement (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2004).

I knew I would need a way to communicate with others who were not familiar with these concepts. For example when I was recruiting potential participants for my study, I needed terminology that would convey the meaning of “teachers who understand and are aware of imposed placement.” Therefore I constructed a list of “descriptors” for potential candidates. This is available as Descriptors of Potential Candidates in Appendix A. When I talked to teacher education program directors, I used these descriptors. I believed I was more likely to receive prospective participants by using language others understood.

My first recruiting decision was to start with colleges of education that place their teaching interns in schools of need. Since I had been in the field of urban education for several years, I was familiar with many of the teacher education programs and their directors, but systematically visited each program’s website for their mission statement, curriculum, and student placement information.

I intentionally selected programs that were known for their rigor and positive outcomes. This was verified in their mission statement, curriculum, student placement policies, and other documents found on their websites.

Because I was concerned with issues of social justice, it was imperative to focus on teachers in urban schools who were teaching historically underserved populations. I was aware that this factor would reduce my candidate pool, but decided that a smaller pool of teachers who

met my criteria would allow me more time with each, netting me more information about the individual and his practice. Each case could become richer.

I contacted the directors of selected programs by email for efficiency. This process saved time and allowed me to present a list of criteria that I was using to select participants. I repeated the process with directors of teaching award programs. I thought that perhaps I would find more potential candidates among those recognized for their excellence in teaching. Attached to the email contact was an invitation to apply to participate in the study. I requested that directors forward the invitation to any teacher alumnae who they believed met my criteria. The invitation included my email and phone number. Through this recruitment process I received zero potential participants. I believe that teachers, especially good ones, are busy people who often have to ignore unnecessary email messages. Perhaps more personal contact would work.

The next time, I called the same program directors. I tried a different tact, and asked if they would contact potential participants requesting permission to provide me with their contact information. I know that teacher education programs are always looking for ways to get their programs recognized, and I was seeking out their star students. The directors kindly made the personal contacts, netting me three good prospects.

Still I attempted to increase my pool by attending programs and events for award-winning teachers and teachers for social justice. I gained two more contacts at a social justice event. I contacted my five candidates and received three responses. I was back to my original number of candidates. Obviously, the small sample was another determining factor in reducing the number of cases in my study.

**Selection procedures.** I identified potential participants by first, introducing the study, and then informing them of the impact it might have on them. I was especially concerned with

the amount of time they would be involved in interviews. I estimated four to five interviews with an hour for each. However, all potential participants demonstrated interest. With their consent, an initial interview was completed in person or by phone. If the individual met the designated criteria, as determined by the initial interview, I formally invited him or her to participate.

All three participants signed the official consent documents. However, after I had begun working with one candidate, her superintendent became wary that I was planning to expose the school district's problems. He threatened to prevent her from continuing to teach a special course she had designed in collaboration with another cohort colleague if she participated in my study. We amicably parted ways.

After reviewing my research plan, the respondents were willing to participate in a Qualifying Interview (see Appendix B). We set up appointments, and I drew up a list of questions that I believed would give me some insight into their worldviews and how these were integrated into their teaching practices. The qualifying interviews were conducted by phone. Although I had a set of questions prepared for my qualifying interview, I sometimes veered from it. Often, I was led by the interviewee to a topic triggered by my question, but not necessarily answering it. These forays provided me with even richer accounts of lived experiences that helped to confirm my selection of participants.

One example of this is the qualifying interview I had with Participant Two. In telling of his lived experience, he began to talk about working with Youth Services International in India. He had become attached to a very young child who had failed to thrive. While he performed his other duties he took it upon himself to consistently attend to this young child, holding him, talking to him, feeding him. As the Interviewee talked about this child, I could hear the emotion in his voice, and could sense his strong sense of commitment to an individual who needed him.

Interviewee Two's example spoke to one particular problem teachers encounter when working in a high-needs environment where all students need you. Many teachers fail to understand the difference between equal and fair. In addition, although I have witnessed academic triage, especially in schools with low-scores on mandatory tests, this clearly points to some of the worst effects of the socio-political contexts of schooling.

Thus, I felt that Interviewee Two exemplified how a good teacher provides each student with what he needs, even if it seems like some students are getting more. That he continues this practice in his classroom was evidence that he is willing to be flexible for the sake of his students. Throughout the initial interview, he focused on students' needs and his willingness to meet those needs despite mandates that might have been impediments to meeting students' needs for other teachers. This was behavior I noted in the mavericks.

Interviewee One clearly understood the imposed placement of his students, and spoke of his marginalized placement as well as his students'. He also provided me with stories of the opportunities he offered his students to see alternative worldviews. In his interview, he talked at length about his own marginalized pre-teaching lived experience.

I made the decision to reduce my case study to the two participants, and not to conduct more searches for potential participants. The decision was made due to time constraints and other practical reasons. As with all case study projects, I was attempting to conduct multiple interviews, observe participants in their classroom context for an extended period of time, and produce a report that was richly textured and multi-layered. I determined that limiting my study to a more wieldy number of cases would give me the opportunity to engage in productive fieldwork.

As I identified potential participants I introduced them to the study and informed them of the impact it might have on them. As I have stated earlier, I was especially concerned with the amount of time they would be involved in interviewing. I alerted the potential participants to this. They were not deterred from participating.

An important subset of participants was the focus groups composed of approximately seven students of each teacher participant. I wanted to insure multiple perspectives in my exploration. It was vital that the students who coexisted with the teacher in the classroom space had a chance to tell their stories from the classroom.

I informed all students of what a focus group was, that it required ethical behavior on the part of participants and that it would require one to two lunch/recess periods. I explained that it was voluntary; those who wanted to participate could merely write their names on slips of paper and put them into the box while the teacher was out. I would choose seven names out of the box randomly, and unobtrusively slip those students permission slips. Those students would in turn bring the documents home for their parents to sign. The students had a few days to return the slips to me in a discrete manner.

In both cases, I was overwhelmed with the response of students who wanted to participate, and attempted to ameliorate the disappointment of non-selected students by joining them in the cafeteria for an informal lunch focused on a current television series they all seemed to be following.

My rationale for the high number of volunteers I encountered for the student focus groups was that students at the ages of 9 through 12 are not typically asked for their observations or input in an authentic way. They all understood that their information would actually be an important piece of my research. They wanted to be heard.

At Site One, seven students participated in two focus group meetings. At Site Two, I met with a group of seven students once, and another group of seven students once. This was due to the inner-workings of the first group who tended to veer off task, and debate irrelevant information. Each interview lasted a full lunch and recess period, approximately 45 minutes.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the many non-selected participants who came along with the site. Although I bounded my cases around the teachers and their classrooms, the school setting and the many individuals who cross in and out of the boundaries of the case, do influence everyday events. I account for them when it is appropriate to the events I select to document. Many will remain on the pages of my field notes due to time, space and relevance to the study.

## **Participants**

The primary participants in my study were two adult males, ages 32 and 34; and 21 students, approximately 11 years old. The student population was composed of approximately half male and half female.

The main adult participants differed ethnically. In the first case, my participant was Caucasian and Mexican-American. In my second case, my participant was Filipino-American.

The ethnic make-up of the student populations were as follows:

- Case One—Latino-American, African- American, and Caucasian
- Case Two—African American, Arabic American, Asian American, Bi-racial, Latino American, and Caucasian

My focus groups were selected randomly from the students in each class by a lottery.

Students from Case One attended school in a racially-mixed community in a suburb. Some students were bused from neighboring suburbs. Students from Case Two attended school

in an area of the inner city formerly populated by persons of depressed socio-economic standing and minority status. This area was transitioning to a higher socioeconomic population. Students were transported by their parents from all areas of the city.

## **Data Collection**

I collected data in multiple forms, including interviews, classroom observation, field notes, school documents, student work samples and focus groups. The purpose of varying forms of data and the processes of collection served to enable triangulation, and to seek consistency within cases. Some of the data collection was format specific.

I privileged the interviews with my participants. I used their stories as the most significant element in my narrative research. Throughout the interviews, I attempted to engage in deep conversations about each participant's goals, ideals, beliefs, intentions and orientation toward their work. During the interviews, my participants revealed parts of their espoused theories, including their understanding of externally imposed social placement, lived experience and teacher education.

I endeavored to capture espoused theories in practice during my observations in their classrooms. While observing, I sought congruence with, and noted incongruence between, participants' narratives and espoused theories, especially in the area of understanding externally imposed social placement (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Observation also provided me with insights related to participants' lived experience and teacher education.

Focus group interviews were a significant component of my research. The student responses supplied me with multiple views of the teacher participant and his work with

marginalized students. Student perspectives were used to corroborate information gleaned from observations and interviews, and to look for alignment with other data sources.

Field notes were kept for the purpose of noting my responses to the study. I also wrote notes to myself and noted questions I had about the process of my research. I often reviewed these on the train ride home.

Student work samples yielded information regarding the type of assignments in which students engaged. I believe that the work assigned to students speaks to the type of learning to which the teacher ascribes. Again it could align with other points of data.

School documents assisted in depicting the general school climate. I felt this was important to the immediate context in which the teacher teaches and provides evidence of the teacher's willingness to either abide by or stretch the rules. It also provides formal data about the school and its population.

**Interviews.** I spent approximately 90 fairly consecutive hours in each teacher's classroom conducting audio-taped interviews with the participants; observing in their classrooms and conducting audio-taped focus groups of students; taking notes; and gathering documents from students, classrooms, and schools. I also utilized photography and illustration with the participants' permission.

The first phase of data collection involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews that took place over a period of time outside the teacher's contractual teaching day (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were all conducted on the school campus in the privacy of each participant's classroom. The first interview was conducted at the end of the first day and varied from one participant to the next in lengths of time from 45 to 85 minutes. Most formal interviews occurred after school and varied in length. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the

teacher defined or described his practice, whether he had any notion of imposed placement, and whether he saw his practice aligning with that concept. Additionally, the interviews were opportunities to engage in conversation with the teacher about his practice and the intentional decisions he makes in practice.

I also wanted to uncover the teachers' lived experiences prior to (and during, or outside of) teaching. The interviews were interspersed with the observations, and although they are separated in this section of my paper, they were each integral to the other (see Appendix C, Initial Interview Questions/Prompts).

The interviews took approximately 4 non-contractual hours for each participant. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed on a regular basis, so that I could incorporate questions or ideas brought up in one interview into the next. This also gave me the opportunity to conduct a members' check. I would summarize the data from the previous interview for each teacher, and ask if the information was correct or needed more clarification. One technique that I used in my interviews was to present questions that invoked more depth of reflection a day or two before our next interview. I was interested in enabling thoughtful consideration of key concepts, and hoped that informing participants in advance of an interview topic would give them some time to consider the idea.

For example, I was very interested in how participants' teacher preparation programs equipped them with the skills to teach in high-needs schools. I also wondered if they were exposed to any critical theory. So, when I inquired about an accommodating time for the next interview, I also informed the participants of the focus of the upcoming interview, telling them that I would be asking them about their teacher education programs and what each of them brought from their programs to their personal practices. By doing this, I hoped to elicit reflection

on their teacher education programs and the interviewees' perspective on how well the programs prepared them for teaching in their current context (see Appendix D, Prompts Used in Subsequent Interviews).

I began with only a few significant prompts or questions. Later in the study, questions were formulated as a result of a prior interview, comment, or observation in the classroom. Thus, they became more interactive and relevant.

**Classroom observations.** Having selected teachers who had portrayed some attributes related to the phenomenon of social awareness in their selection interviews, I wanted to observe how that social awareness was manifested both explicitly and implicitly in the teachers' practice. How does this notion of awareness of social placement inform a teacher's teaching? I had some ideas about what I might observe, but was sincerely hoping to learn more about the practices of teachers who had exhibited an understanding of social placement. Additionally, I was looking for alignment between what the teachers had professed in interviews about their particular styles of teaching, and the acts of teaching that verified those teaching practices. I was also watching for specific actions aligning their beliefs with their actual practice.

I also used observations as one of several sources of information about a single case. Looking for alignment among data collected through a variety of methods could serve as triangulation for my study conveying internal consistency.

When I found incongruity between a teacher's espoused theories and his actions and verbalization in practice, I formed it into a question for an interview. For example in Case One, during an interview John conveyed his genuine concern for his students. Later, I observed him engage in chastising a student in front of his classmates. I saw this as an inconsistency between what he purportedly valued in his classroom and his actual practice. I asked him about this in a

subsequent interview. John admitted he was hard on his students, and confessed to a tough love approach to teaching. I began to see how tough love and concern for his students played out in his practice and noted this in my case study of John. Interestingly, this same notion came out in his class focus group. Several students spoke of John correcting their speech patterns. They attributed this to his concern for them, especially in the future, when they had to be able to speak professionally.

In a flow chart, I demonstrated how I felt teachers' lived experience, classroom practice, and students' confirmation of the latter align. I believe this conveys consistency in a single case. Observations focused on the teacher as he engages in various aspects of his practice, including preparing lessons, planning, or reflecting. Because my focus was primarily on the teacher (and not students), I continued to focus on what the teacher was doing when students moved into small groups or engage in individual seatwork.

Occasionally, I requested a post-observation debriefing. I used these to ask teachers questions I had on a lesson I was observing or about particular incidents in the classroom. These were often recorded in the margins of my observation notebooks and took many different forms, including the form of a "think-aloud," a metacognitive strategy often taught to students to monitor their own cognitive processes. This strategy entails an individual verbalizing his or her thinking. I attempted to nudge the teacher toward sharing thoughts and decisions related to his practice when appropriate. For example, I noticed Ron pointing out a student's expertise in math equations. It was a practice I observed consistently in his room. I asked him about it during a free period. He told me that it was a strategy called "assigning competence" to an individual student in front of his peers. This, he claimed, goes a long way in building a sense of self-efficacy in the student and reinforcing his value to the classroom community.

During observations, I tried to capture contexts such as space, class make up, time, configurations of students, placement of teacher in my observation notebook. Primarily, though, I attended to teacher-student interactions, student-student interactions, teacher-teacher assistant interactions, teacher-teacher interactions and teacher-researcher interactions as they occurred throughout the day. Additionally, I attempted to attend to and capture incidents and events in a detailed manner. I used a lot of shorthand and symbols. Simultaneously, I rendered my questions, internal musings, and reflection on what I noticed and heard in the margins of my observation notebook. I had a separate notebook for each case that I reflected in on a regular basis. On the train ride home, I reviewed the day using my observation notebook. If there was an incomplete phrase, I completed it while it was fresh in my memory. Sometimes, I replayed teacher-student interactions in my mind trying to glean more understanding of a situation or the larger scheme.

**Field notebook.** I kept a field notebook, separate from my observation notebooks, in which I documented my thoughts and feelings about my research and how it is going. Sometimes I recorded the way I perceive an interaction with a teacher. Often, things that I noticed, such as the teacher not eating in the Teachers' Room, became fodder for my field notebook. The Field Notebook was useful in capturing my thoughts and processes as I made my way through my exploration. I viewed it as a companion, a place to share my feelings and the conflicts I encountered. I referred to my Field Notebook frequently when I began to write up my research. It became a method by which to reflect on my inner self during poignant moments in my study. It aided in insuring that my internal tensions were not coloring my work.

**School documents.** As a case researcher, I was interested in the schools in which my participants were teaching, as they significantly impacted the context of my case study. Although participants and their classrooms were my initial unit of analysis, the classroom is a component

of the school and the school system. School documents provide valuable information on the accepted norms of the system. Viewing school documents as a comparative device enables a more nuanced perspective of how what is taking place in the participant's classroom breaks from these norms or accommodates them. Thus I observed the school in general, seeking out its mission statements, school rules and policies, juxtaposing these with the observations and interviews I was conducting.

**Student work.** In addition, with permission, I was able to make copies of some documents of student work which informed my study. I was interested in the nature of the student work, and the teacher's rationale for assigning it. The student work gave me some insight into what the teacher deemed to be worth learning. This provided me with more insight into the teacher's practice as well as serving as another point in triangulation within each case.

In Case 2, students were encouraged by their teacher to share their work with me. I was also requested to serve as a participant of a portfolio review. One of the students walked me through her portfolio entry by entry, explaining what each artifact was, and the reason for its inclusion in her portfolio. This was insightful.

**Student focus groups.** It follows that if the purpose of education is to prepare individuals for active, informed participation in the democratic process, assist them in their quests toward self-actualization, and educate them for productive, satisfying life-work, teachers would consistently seek their students' feedback. Enabling students to voice concern or satisfaction is a component of critically conscious teaching as well as a means of reflexive practice for the teacher. I felt that the students were integral in each case study, and could provide important perspectives for my research.

Rather than reviewing standardized test scores of the participants' students, or relying on the teacher participant's view of his students, I opted to interview them instead. I conducted student focus groups at each of the sites composed of approximately six current students per teacher participant. The purpose of the focus groups was to capture the students' perspectives on what they were learning and to describe their teachers' practices. I was also interested in any consequential differences students experienced between their current teacher and former teachers, that implicitly or explicitly indicated teacher or student awareness and/or action on imposed placement.

I chose to acquire this information in groups for specific reasons. First, it was expeditious, requiring less interviews. It was also the case that one student's response would provoke information from others. Often this information was confirmatory, but at times it contradicted the original statement resulting in group discussion and engaging collective memory. In unresolved discussion, I noted all perspectives. I rendered predominance to statements that most closely aligned with the phenomenon of social placement, regardless of their confirmatory nature. This provided more descriptive and nuanced data that I could use to check for consistency with other forms of data collected. This also enabled me to note discrepancies and to discern their significance to the study.

In each classroom, all the students wanted to participate, although it meant giving up recess and lunch with classmates. I believe that students enjoy having the ear of an attentive listener, and having input into my research appealed to them. I appreciated having such a large pool from which to draw. I felt that this minimized bias, and enabled me to produce a representative sample through a lottery.

I collected the selected group members from their lunchroom. In this way they remained anonymous to their teachers. All minors were given informed consent forms to be signed by guardians prior to the group meeting.

The student focus groups took place in the media centers during lunch and recess providing the students with a venue in which they were able to speak freely, but were still visible to other adults. All focus groups were scheduled near the end of my residence in the classrooms. Although I had intended on conducting only one focus group meeting at each site, I actually conducted two at each school. The students had much to share about their teachers. Additionally, some of the comments were conflicting so the group needed the time to talk through these issues. Each focus group took approximately 30-45 minutes.

Case One's initial Focus Group met on April 23, 2007. Due to the proliferation of irrelevant details and conflict among members unrelated to the topic, I deemed this interview unproductive. It was taped and transcribed, but it yielded no pertinent information to the study. I went back to the remaining names in the pool and chose 7 new participants. I followed the same procedures for informed consent and anonymity and met with that group on April 25, 2007. The Focus Group from Case Two convened on June 5 and 6, 2007. There were 7 new participants in the second group.

## **Data Analysis**

I conducted my data analysis in a series of phases. Specifically, my analysis phases were: (a) coding interviews with teachers, (b) coding classroom observations, and (c) coding student focus groups. Although I reviewed student work and documents collected from participants' schools, I did not code them. I used them instead for contextual information.

After the selection interviews, I embarked on initial data coding. In the first phase, prior to entering the classrooms, I used essential concepts from the literature review and my framework to devise codes. These codes were to be used to assess the extent to which participants' views of their teaching mapped onto the existing perspectives found in the literature on critically conscious teachers.

I had begun devising codes after I conducted the selection interview. Using my literature review and my theoretical framework, I came up with 162 codes. Upon entering Participant One's classroom, I found little or no evidence of many of these concepts, but noticed other dispositions and concepts in play. I altered the coding to align more closely with the interviews first and then, in phase two, the observations. At that point I had 62 codes. After eliminating replication, I had a more succinct set of 32 codes.

At the end of my tenure in Classroom One, I read through interview transcripts (phase 2), observations in field notes (phase 3), and transcripts from the focus groups (phase 4). I reviewed student work and other artifacts (phase 5). I created a more manageable and coherent set of 31 codes (see Appendix D).

In my final phase of coding (phase 6), I reviewed all of the data I had collected from Participant One. To ensure consistency, I performed a frequency count and looked at coded data that aligned throughout narratives, observations, focus groups and other data. I wrote a summary focusing on internal consistency, or triangulation. It is at the end of this chapter.

During my second case, I began collecting data and coding it in the same sequence as Classroom One. I noted new factors impacting my study, and added on codes as needed. To ensure consistency, I performed a frequency count and looked at coded data that aligned

throughout narratives, observations, focus groups, and other data. I wrote a summary focusing on internal consistency. It is also at the end of this chapter.

I returned to my first case, reread, and recoded it. I then rewrote my summary for Case One. In revisiting my data, I focused inquiry to more genuinely capture these teachers' possible attempts at addressing their issues. Of course this led to another round of reading each case study, editing codes, coding, performing frequency counts and writing case summaries. Eventually, this led to 38 codes, including the codes which I drew from the actual case studies (see Table 1). Codes from the case studies are denoted with a superscript and accompanying table note.

Table 1

*Analytic Codes Derived From the Literature/Study*

Formative experiences	Manifest practices	Student outcomes
F-EFE: Early formative experience	M-TAPI: Teacher aware of own social placement	S-AccSocCap: Students can access social capital
F-Rac: Racialization as formative	M-TAStPI: Teacher aware of students' placement	S-StAPI: Students are aware of social placement
F-Sch: Schooling as formative	M-TASch: Teacher aware of role of schooling in placement	S-ActPI: St acts on placement
F-CarExp: Former career experience	M-TASPE Sch: Teacher aware of social, political and economic influence on schooling	S-StThPI: Students think pluralistically
F-LLE: Later lived experience	M-CrCur: Teacher critiques curriculum, textbooks and other mandated educational materials	S-STAC-N: Students are aware of counter narratives
F-Mat: Maturation as formative	M-MulPer: Teacher teaches multiple perspectives	S-St ADomDis: Students are aware of dominant discourse
F-Ref: Reflection on formation	M-EDw/St: Teacher engages with students re: placement issues	S-StA: Students have a sense of agency

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Formative experiences	Manifest practices	Student outcomes
F-TE: Teacher education as formative	M-ActP: Teacher employs opportunities to act on placement	S-St pos id: Students have positive sense of identity
	M-PrC-Nar: Teacher privileges counter-narratives	S-StR: Student is resilient
	M-CDED: Teacher challenges dominant educational discourse	S-ST MP: Student demonstrates a capacity to see multiple perspectives <sup>a</sup>
	M-DS: Teacher instructs specifically on how to “do school” <sup>a</sup>	S-ES: Students engage in struggle <sup>a</sup>
	M-HE: Teacher holds high expectations for students <sup>a</sup>	S-SkI: Students demonstrate skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>
	M-Str: Teacher engages students in collaborative struggle <sup>a</sup>	S-StATHE: Students are aware of teacher’s high expectations <sup>a</sup>
	M-TKSt: Teacher knows students holistically <sup>a</sup>	S-StFTKnST: Student feels that teacher knows him <sup>a</sup>
	M-TStI: Teacher teaches skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	S-Str: Students are aware of their need to struggle <sup>a</sup>
	M-CR: Teacher teaches in a culturally relevant manner <sup>a</sup>	
	M-IW: Teacher engages in student identity work <sup>a</sup>	
M-AC: Teacher seeks out and assigns competence to students <sup>a</sup>		

<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

In chapters four and five, I present each case study with excerpts of participants’ and focus groups’ narratives interspersed with my observations. Together they form a descriptive text. Following each case study is an internal consistency report, a flow chart representing internal consistency between specific categories of coded data, and an explanation of the flow

chart. In chapter six, I present a cross-case analysis, and chapter seven is the conclusion with findings and implications for further research. There are frequency counts of the coded data in the Appendices under Frequency of Incidents, Case One, and Case Two.

## Chapter 4

### Case One: John Kinzie

#### Lived Experience

**Introducing John Kinzie.** I am seemingly driving in circles to find the school where John Kinzie teaches. Curving streets, cul-de-sacs and limited access from the surrounding neighborhoods demonstrate the insular model of the suburban enclave. This school, like so many others built back when white flight from the city led to burgeoning suburbs, stands on the least desirable tract of land in the subdivision. I finally identify the school on a bleak piece of property separated from the expressway by an 8 foot high chain-link fence (Field journal, p. 1).

Having experienced the initiation rite of school door security measures, I am not surprised by them at this school. My introduction to the principal is brief, and I am left to navigate the long corridors intersecting in the middle of the one-story school to find John's room. John greets me warmly and introduces me to his class as Mrs. Erikson, his former college professor. He explains that I will be visiting the classroom for a while to learn more about teaching. I am ushered to an empty chair in the back of the room by a polite student. John is in the midst of a pep talk for a test his students will be taking tomorrow (Obs. NB 1, p. 1).

Remember, that even if you have an "A" going for you, an "F" cuts it in half. You need to study tonight! Today is a perfect day to study because it's raining, so you have all night. Oh! Wait, that's right. *American Idol* is on tonight, so you can take one hour off for *American Idol*, and then get back to studying. (Obs. NB1, p. 1)

Although this information may seem obvious to the casual observer, it is important to note that not all students know this. John's reminder is a strategy used by teachers to help students learn how to "do school." While all students should understand this regardless of their placement, this information is largely ignored in high needs schools, that is schools with

populations of historically underserved and underfunded students. These students need to be explicitly informed about the systems that are in place. They need to be specifically taught how homework, assignments, and tests connect to the grade on their school report card (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 20). Education for these children is high stakes education. It is just one of the many assets they need to access mainstream culture. Their marginalized status due to racial and social inequity puts them behind the privileged dominant culture. They have a strike against them before they set foot in a classroom.

John, a former student of mine, is a fifth grade teacher in a high needs school located in a Midwestern suburb. His class is a composition of 45% Latino, 50% African American and 5% Caucasian students. Most of John's Latino students speak Spanish as their first language and live in the subdivision. The African American students are bused in from a neighboring suburb (Int. 1, p. 4). This school is the one in which John was placed by his teacher education program. He is still teaching there 3 years later. He has a contract to teach for 5 years in one of the schools of need with which this teacher education program partners.

I notice students shifting in their seats and rustling papers, actions that seem to signify a transition of some kind. As the students take out textbooks, a student offers one to me, then whispers the page number they are on. I use the moment to settle in, and begin to notice my surroundings. The pale-painted cinder block walls are reminiscent of school rooms that I have inhabited, as both a student and a teacher. One wall has a row of hooks mounted on it. This is where the students keep their coats and backpacks, which tend to spill out of that space. The opposite wall has considerable shelving where books, organized by reading level, and other student materials are kept. There seems to be a number of textbooks and resources as well, all accessible to the students. The desks and separate chairs are in rows, some facing toward the

front of the room, others facing each other. Metal chair cleats scrape and squeak on the tile floor. One lone metal cabinet houses the precious few supplies of colored paper, markers, and some hands-on resources (Obs. NB1, p. 4).

There is something compelling about all the hand-rendered charts competing for wall space. One informs on math operations, another on liquid measurement. There is a chart for reading strategies and another labeled “Routines for Partner Reading.” I am impressed that it doesn’t read: “Rules.” Savvy teachers familiar with the mandates governing the federal standardized tests know that any chart put up on a teacher’s wall before a determined date, is permitted to remain on his walls during testing. These teachers get the charts up early and familiarize their students with them. This enables students to refer to them quickly and easily during the tests. It appears that John has been preparing his students well (Obs. NB1, p. 28). In fact, he invokes the information on the sequence of math operations chart: *Please Mind Dear Aunt Sally* (Parentheses, Multiplication, Division, Addition and Subtraction) during math class (Obs. NB1, p. 29).

As I continue to peruse the room, John’s desk startles me. It is placed at the side of the front of the room facing the students. The top is monastically neat except for the gurgling water fountain and bamboo growing in a vase of water and blue marbles. These I find to be symbolic and congruent with John’s interest in Eastern thought (Int. 2, p. 5). Still, they contrast with the overall starkness of the classroom. Is this John’s small but essential oasis of calm? Are these objects here for the students to experience? Are they gifts? Somehow I cannot imagine John purchasing and placing these items on his desk. However, there is a lot I do not know about John (Int. 1, p. 4).

After school on my first day of observation John answers his classroom phone. The blonde hair, blue-eyed teacher immediately switches from English to a heavily accented Spanish. When I ask him if he speaks Spanish, he informs me that he is 50% Mexican! This is a surprise to me. I thought he was Swedish! John also tells me that he was raised in a bicultural/bilingual household-- his mother, Mexican, and his father, Anglo. John's formative years were influenced by his mother's Mexican culture. John grew up in a Mexican neighborhood, just a stone's throw away from an African American Community (Int. 1p. 1).

**Insider status v. outsider status.** John, the oldest of five children including a cousin, grew up in an area considered the "hood." It lay in the shadow of the old steel mills, left to Latinos and African Americans as a result of white flight (Int. 1, p. 1).

Although John grew up Mexican, he appears to be Caucasian. With light skin, blonde hair and blue eyes, he only passed for Mexican in his own neighborhood and school because his family was known. However, when he traveled to nearby Latino or African-American neighborhoods, he was perceived as "White." This often caused problems for him (Int. 1, p1).

John recalls the story of a group of white kids wandering into his neighborhood one winter. He found himself aligned with his brothers and friends throwing snowballs at the kids "invading his territory." In hindsight, John laughs at the bewilderment of the white kids seeing a white face among the brown ones belonging to the attackers (Int. 1, p. 10).

However, passing as a Latino became increasingly problematic as John grew older. He attended the State's University on a President's Scholarship. He checked in at the Latino/a Cultural Center where he received a lukewarm reception. Fellow students challenged his Mexican background. John was able to find a Mexican friend at the Cultural Center to vouch for him (Int. 1, p. 3-4). This was the first time John fully experienced the status of "outsider." His

white features left him bereft of credentials needed for membership in this group. Even his surname denies his Latino heritage.

Most memorable to John was a conversation his mother held with him at an earlier age.

You know, John, you look White, so the Black kids aren't gonna trust you. The Mexicans aren't gonna trust you either. You're Mexican so the White people aren't gonna trust you. You're kind of in an in-between area. You've got everybody against you or not trusting you. (Int. 1, p. 3)

John thought about that conversation a lot. He had always felt like he did not fit in anywhere. His Mexican friends sometimes used him as a spy to check in on what the White kids were up to (Int. 1, p. 3).

When I chose John for participation in this study, I did not know that he was bicultural. I believe John's lived experience as bicultural and his reflection on those experiences may form his understanding of his own imposed placement. However, John's physical features, that of a blue-eyed, blonde Caucasian, add levels of complexity that I can only begin to address here. He was an anomaly in his neighborhood, but accepted, as he was a member of a "Mexican" family. Thus he believed he was Mexican, which indeed he is. Gradually he recognizes that he is different. As so much of one's identity is aligned with one's culture, the recognition of being bicultural must have caused major dissonance for John.

He reiterates the story of the snowball fight. He has a good laugh recalling his younger self, who did not notice that he looked different from his friends and brothers. As John began to experience his Caucasian side, his physical Whiteness, he had yet to come to terms with that component of his identity. In an interview, John relates,

I try to make sure that my students don't feel isolated because I know that isolation. I've seen it not only with myself, but my little brother had to put up with a lot more bias than I did. I think having that in my background has definitely shaped not only my teaching but really the way I look at things in general, you know, in society as a whole. (Int. 1, p. 5)

John's experiences of cultural bias have a formative effect on him, his worldview, and his teaching. As a result, John attempts to create a classroom community. He disallows put-downs, creates "insider" jokes that the whole class is in on, and attempts to encourage a positive attitude towards one another.

John recalls his early education experiences in an interview.

I was really good in school. It was really easy. When I got to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I was bussed to an accelerated program at Green Park High School. So, I went there for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as my first 2 years of high school. I actually had to take a public bus from my neighborhood to my other school, which was in a different neighborhood, and then, take a school bus from there to Green Park. At Green Park I was with a lot more Black kids, but then also a different kind of White kid from an upper class neighborhood. People are weird. Those upper class kids seemed so weird! (Int. 1, p. 1&9)

John is fortunate that his teachers recognized his talent, and recommended him for an accelerated program in another district. Again, one may question factors motivating John's teachers to acknowledge his talents. Perhaps his white features offered a semblance of privilege, even for a bright student.

It is a mixed blessing that John has to travel outside his own school to access this program. He endures lengthy commutes on public transportation and has to transition into a new and different environment. However, he is exposed to a greater array of humanity.

From the time I was in maybe 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade my parents really emphasized the importance of me going to college. In fact, I was just thinking of that this morning, driving in, about trying to emphasize to the kids how important education is. Actually, I was thinking about Martin, because he always wants the extra attention. And to this day, as an adult, I still equate being smart with getting extra attention. (Int. 1, p. 5)

In this piece of narrative John connects his own early experiences with his practice, particularly one student's actions. John's equation of "being smart" with receiving extra attention is interesting. He applies this self reflection to a student who also vies for attention.

John yearns to instill a sense of the importance of education to his students. He sees it as a key to entry into mainstream society, an achievable goal for all his students (Int. 1, p. 6).

During one of our interviews, John tells about his family and their notions of Whiteness.

It was weird because even though my dad is White, and I look White, there was always this running joke. While traveling through the East Side we would comment, “Oh, yeah. Those are the White people. They have all the money, and they have the bigger houses. They always take from the Mexicans. Yeah, that’s right. Screw them.” (Int. 1, p. 9)

Here, John presents the irony of criticizing White people for their privileged lifestyle, while in fact the critics, John and his father, are White. Although left unspoken, John’s father appears to identify with the Mexican culture, and voices anger toward the Whites for “taking from the Mexicans.” The concept of “class,” for young John and his father seems synonymous with race or culture.

I guess the biggest thing I’ve learned as I got older and we left our neighborhood in the city, was how insulated communities can be. In my old neighborhood there was the prevailing social view of what was acceptable. These are the good movies. This is the good music. These are the styles that fit in. You leave that neighborhood and all of a sudden the things that you thought were cool are the worst things you could possibly do. Now these things are cool, and these ideas are right, and these are the ideas to be proposed. I thought, “Wow, that’s neat.” (Int. 1, p. 9)

The insular nature of communities holds, I believe, regardless of class or culture. It is the glue that binds us together, gives us a sense of comfort and familiarity. Most of us tend to move to communities, both spatial and human, in which we are accepted. In return the values of the community become the norms by which we live.

Although communities are not static, they tend to maintain the status quo. They become more dynamic when large shifts of change disrupt the status quo. As John leaves his neighborhood, he begins to see other ways of being. He blames the insularity of perspectives on the neighborhoods.

Then I finish university, and I end up in another social circle, if you will. Again, social views change. I am very fortunate to have come from the inner city to a somewhat better suburb. Then, I am able to be on my own, living in Detroit and New York City [working for a nationally syndicated afternoon talk show]. It always reminds me of my childhood experiences and my view in that sheltered environment, almost like a sealed environment, and all the biases that I saw come from that cultural viewpoint. This is how Mexicans see the world. This is what's right. This is what's wrong. This is who's oppressing you. This is who's exploiting you. (Int. 1, p. 9)

The concept of a "social circle" evokes an image of a flat, chalk-drawn circle on an asphalt playground. The chalk delineates a border: those inside its boundaries are players; those outside are the onlookers, the "wanna-bes."

John claims a change in his social views over time while disclosing the biases of his "sealed environment," or circle. He reveals his understanding of a marginalized, cultural perspective and notions of oppression and exploitation. He begins to recognize his expansion in perspectives is a result of his ability to access social capital and the process of maturing and moving on. I sense that John's whiteness eases the way for him. However, John does not examine the biases he may have exchanged for a new set.

I think my experiences as a kid impact my teaching greatly, taking my experiences and combining those with the experiences I picked up substituting in other towns where I see a lack of respect for Hispanic families. It pains me to acknowledge the biases that exist. As a result, I try to be as all-inclusive as I can be. (Int. 1, p. 5)

When John allows himself to pass as White, he is privy to the slurs on Mexicans made by Whites. He witnesses how Mexican and Black children are treated in the classrooms of some White teachers. Administrators confide in him about the problem these children present to schools.

In the passage above, John revisits his childhood experiences in a spiraling movement. He now recognizes the legitimacy of his early biases and connects them to his heightened awareness of racism. This is a critical point in the narratives.

John realizes that it will not be as easy for his students to assimilate. He realizes his unique situation is not representative of his students' situations. He believes he has to be tougher on his students so they will be prepared for succeeding in a racialized society. He creates a classroom environment that is all-inclusive, but not necessarily painless.

Now, John continuously reflects on his and his students' imposed social placement, looking for ways to transcend it. He accepts his own capacity to pass as White. Perhaps he has even worked on it. He has no accent, he dresses in traditionally Caucasian apparel, and he appears to embrace the norms of the dominant culture.

Concurrently, he teaches his students how to assimilate into the dominant White culture. However, his is not a process of acculturation. He "plays the dozens" with his students. He engages his students in researching the lesser known African Americans who struggled against oppression. They research Paul Robeson, Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), and other lesser known Black activists. They also study Latino activists Che Guevara, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta (Int. 2, p. 9). He consistently talks about "the Man," a metaphor for those who have the privilege and power to obstruct raced populations from achieving the American Dream.

I believe that John's bi-cultural identity and experiences, together with his reflection on these experiences throughout our interviews, illustrate an in-depth understanding of his own and his students' social placement. I discuss John's acting on his understanding of placement in the next section.

**Caring v. demanding.** The first few days in the classroom are uncomfortable ones. I feel like the rookie I am. I am not sure where to sit. (I make a note to ask John.) The kids ask me for help. Should I help them? (I make another note to ask John.) However, the most disconcerting of all is, this John is not the John I know as a student from my university classes (Field Jnl, p. 1).

For example, a student comes over and asks John if he and his kindergarten reading partner should sit on the floor. In an African American dialect the student drops the final r on the word “floor.” John retorts, “Flo? What’s a flo?” (Obs. NB1, p. 4).

Another time a student finishes his work and asks Mr. Kinzie what he should do next. John responds, “So now you’re going to do nothing? You should go sit in Ms. \_\_\_\_\_’s room. Her students sit around and do nothing.” Especially disturbing was the fact that John knew that I knew Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. She had also been one of my students (Obs. NB 1, p. 12).

I don’t wait until the next interview to ask John my collection of questions. The first chance I have is during a break. John is casually shuffling through papers. I ask him where I should sit when I observe. He tells me that where I am sitting in the back of the classroom is fine. Next, I ask him how he feels about me helping kids. He takes a minute to think. “You can help them, but only after you allow them to struggle for a while,” he responds. He informs me of the importance of his students not to look for easy answers. He wants them to stay with a problem, analyze it, think it through. He wants them to struggle a little bit, not to give up. Once he mentions it, I begin to see struggle as a theme in John Kinzie’s classroom (Fld. Notes, 3-21-07).

This is significant as this becomes a pervasive theme within John’s case study. It is also prevalent in the literature on critical theory. The notion of struggling, and being part of a historical struggle against imposed placement enables coalition against adaptation to one’s oppressed status (Freire, 1974). It is in struggle that men resist adapting an oppressed mentality and attain their full human capacity.

Finally, I deliver the blow. You’re pretty tough on your kids, I tell him, looking right into his eyes. He turns bright pink. I falter. This is not a judgment, I maintain, merely an observation. I am sure you have a rationale (Fld. Notes, 3-21-07).

“Yes, I am tough with my kids,” he states, “but we have our laughs, too.” Then John tells me that he is different from other teachers in his school. He tells me he holds very high standards and expectations for his students. He believes they are being coddled by other teachers who don’t take their teaching responsibilities seriously, and he claims that his students learn more in one year with him, than the year prior to it. He worries about them next year when they move to middle school, and expresses his concerns with passion in his voice (Fld. Notes, 3-21-07).

### **Classroom Observation**

Now I am observing with an ever-growing laundry list of items to seek. First on the list is “laughs.” This is not unlike playing Travel Bingo while driving. As the classroom full of students flows past me, parents, teachers and other students move in and out of this space, the principal makes her fifth announcement for the day on the intercom, I try to keep my eyes on John, while capturing his interactions and existence in relation to all the players in this case (Field notes, 3-21-07).

A student walks from the classroom computer center to the teacher with a paper in his hands (Obs. NB 1, p. 12). The students have all been assigned reports on individuals who have impacted history including Constantine, Gandhi, Alexander the Great, Mozart, Machiavelli, Plato and Helen of Troy (Int. 4, p. 6).

“Is the Sistine Chapel in Italy?” the student asks the teacher.

“You’re on the web with the whole world at your fingertips, and you’re asking me?” The teacher takes the paper from the student’s hands. It is a report on 15<sup>th</sup> Century sculptor, Donatello.

“Really?” the teacher asks aloud, trying to mask his humor. “Donatello was born in Italy, and he was a Teen-Age Mutant Ninja Turtle? No.”

The teacher hands the paper back, as he laughs with amusement. “You better get out of here with this.” The student is laughing with the teacher as he returns to the computer center. I place a tic next to “laughs” (Obs. NB 1, p. 5).

A week passes and John is wrapping up his unit on Great Figures in History. “Don’t forget,” John shouts over the productive noise, “this is the last day of class you’ll be working on this. You’ll finish it at home now.”

“Even though we’re finishing it at home, can we bring it in and have it checked?” requests a student in a display of insecurity.

“No. I gave you all the information you needed. I went over your drafts with you. Now you have to finish it on your own.”

The student writing about Donatello looks upset. “Why do I have to do this over?”

“You should have been less focused on how he was a Ninja Turtle, and more focused on who he actually was,” the teacher shoots back. Then, “When I call your table you will put your writing folders away. You are now finished here. The rest you will do at home. You are now on your own” (Obs. NB 1, p. 12).

John seems to have a genuine rapport with his students as evidenced in the “Ninja Turtle” incident, but that does not mean he lowers his expectations. When the same student fails to perform to the criteria set by Mr. Kinzie, he is reprimanded.

Although John has reviewed drafts with each individual student, the reader can still observe some insecurity by a student unsure if he can, in fact, complete the assignment on his own. John is reassuring here as he reminds the student that he has all the information he needs to

succeed on this assignment independently. This is significant in building a sense of self-efficacy in students: letting them know they are capable to continue autonomously.

John's practice seems like a tough love approach to teaching. He is caring, yet hold his students to high expectations. It calls to mind the "Warm Demander" school of education. These are highly structured teachers of African American and other marginalized students, who often resort to punitive action to keep each child on track. They know each student and his family intimately. At any time they can tell you where each child is in each academic area and speak knowledgeably about that student's work habits and behavior (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Irvine, 2003; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2007).

They are keenly aware of the challenges these children face and will continue to face in society. Warm Demanders feel personally responsible for the academic and social progress of each of their students, and do not take that responsibility lightly.

For all the fear they strike into their students' hearts, there is the feeling of knowing that this teacher will always stand by you. In *Listening to Urban Children* (Wilson & Corbett, 2001), students convey their need and desire for teachers who "stay on them." This feeling is prevalent in John's class, and verified by the Interview with the Student Focus Group.

I think that when he corrects us, he's like trying to help us with language and the way to say it. (St Foc Grp 1)

I actually took notes on how I was feeling in math class yesterday, and I wrote "Mr. Kinzie explains things well. Usually in math he explains it most well. He makes all of the subjects fun by using either big words or funny explanations." So I think that makes us enjoy going to school, because actually, honestly, he's my favorite teacher, because he actually does this stuff (tells jokes, sic). He actually wants us to come here every single day and learn. (St Foc Grp 1)

John holds high expectations for his students. He wants each of them to attend college (Fld. Notes, p. 1). He reiterates the importance of education to his students. John is providing his

students with the ability to assimilate into the dominant culture. At the same time he respects their cultural identities, by speaking Spanish when a student does not understand a concept in English (Kohl, 1994). He also engages them in culturally relevant experiences. John works to help his students assimilate without surrendering their cultural identities in the process. However, a critical pedagogue would encourage students to go beyond assimilation. These teachers actually work with their students to act on placement issues. Consider the strategies used by the dominant culture to maintain its status quo as a “game.” Critical pedagogy reaches beyond notions of teaching students how to play the game, into ways of teaching students how to change the game (Gutierrez, 2011). I wonder whether John is teaching his kids how to play the game, rather than change it.

In a pre-observation interview, John speaks about society and social stratification. He asserts that the privileged relegate others to a lower rank. He speaks of teaching his mostly minority students about socially imposed placement, and their need to “beat the system.” In my first face-to-face interview with John, I ask him to express his educational philosophy. I have already ascertained that John is aware of his own socially imposed placement. This is a characteristic related to critical consciousness.

### **John’s Educational Stance**

I would like to think of it as an enlightened sort of teaching method. You know? It reminds me of Buddhism, there’s no God you’re searching for; you’re just searching for that enlightenment. You know, once you’ve reached that in Nirvana your duty is to pass on what you’ve learned. (Int. 2, p. 5)

As John expounds on his philosophy of education, fragments of his own marginalized status surface. Two ideas jump out at me. First is the notion that John equates education with

enlightenment. The word “enlightenment” connotes deep understanding. John believes he is teaching for deep understanding.

The second idea, regarding nirvana, implies that John feels he has reached total enlightenment, and it is now his responsibility to share this with his students. Further in the narrative he verifies this as he discusses the great philosophers and his understanding of their ideas and theories. He believes the need to impart this knowledge to his students is for their own benefits and their impact on society.

Well, you know, to teach for enlightenment or to be what I would call an enlightened teacher, I think you have to stress and really get across to your kids that the world is bigger than what’s outside their front door. I know growing up in the inner city, on the proverbial wrong side of the tracks, my world was my neighborhood, and that was it. Very rarely did people get out. Very rarely could they see outside of that subculture. And I think that to be a teacher who wants their children to reach that enlightened level, they really have to stress that there’s more out there to that. And to actually show the connections from what they do in their immediate surroundings and how that can connect to the bigger world. You know, I didn’t pick those ideas up until I hit college and my philosophy courses. So, I think that really has to be stressed to the kids. (Int. 4, p. 1)

I think along with that, with showing them how their immediate surroundings connect to a larger society, but really show how they as people are actually a part of that and how they can contribute to that, to its change or to its advancement or even to its detriment. You’re trying to emphasize or show the magnitude of a negative behavior or mentality or something. So not only are they a part of something, but that they actually can impact that. Kind of like the butterfly effect theory. (Int. 4, p1)

Here John speaks to the teacher’s knowledge of the student’s social placement, and the understanding, from his own lived experience, how that placement is constructed. Beginning with the notion of “my neighborhood” connoting a sense of belonging and identity, John then emphasizes the role of the teacher as a builder of bridges, connecting neighborhood to world. In this way he extends student’s membership in the student’s neighborhood to membership in society, and presents him with opportunities to engage with and potentially change society.

Thus, it would seem that John understands he needs to actually offer students opportunities to act on their placement and influence change in society. We have seen some evidence of John's attempts to assimilate his students: teaching them the grading system, covering a mini-version of the Western Canon, and correcting cultural dialects. As the narrative unfolds we seek evidence of John preparing his students to change the game, rather than assimilating and learning how to play the game (Gutierrez, 2011).

John continues,

Like I said, so much from my personal experience, where I grew up, and then seeing things as I was fortunate enough to move out of that subculture, I didn't realize that there was more to life than that little microcosm of existence. And when I started seeing different things, it was shocking. I almost was on the defensive . . . for a period of time. This is my subculture. This is it. This is my world. How dare you say it's something differently? And I think we really need to show kids that there's more out there. (Int. 4, p. 1)

I believe that this quote acknowledges both John's bicultural status, and his whiteness as a privilege he uses to move between cultures. Concurrently, it provokes his anger and denial. Who gives the dominant culture the authority to invalidate another's cultural existence? This is an ongoing dilemma for John. Still, he speaks about the importance of showing students that there is "more out there," inconceivable realities distant from their insulated lives.

In another interview, John tells me his cousin gave him a book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*.

"Do you know the book?" he asks me.

"Yes," I reply. "It was written by Neil Postman."

That John has read or "dabbled in" (his words; Int. 1, p. 7) *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* secretly thrills me. The subversion extolled in this book, is simply good teaching. It's about divergent, critical, and creative thinking. Questioning the status quo, examining the

process of schooling, and scrutinizing the definition of democracy: these are the teaching practices Postman and Weingartner (1968) emphasize. This book is instructive in critical pedagogy, and seems to have been written for the problems that plague schools, especially high needs schools, today.

John continues,

I do think that teachers, educators can change society, but most teachers won't step up to the plate and use it as that tool. There's that anonymous quote, "Wherever you are, you can thank a teacher for you getting there." And if you have the ability to shape minds and to plant ideas or to even foster discussions, I mean, you can move mountains with that. We did a whole week's worth of lessons on Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. I had 5<sup>th</sup> grader, Bruce, going to Washington. He's like, "Mr. Kinzie, this is ridiculous." And to not utilize that for "good" is almost like letting potential go to waste. I do think that educators can change the world. They have so much influence, no matter what grade level they're teaching, from the little ones up to the university level. And I really do think they have that power, and it needs to be embraced and acknowledged as such. (Int. 1, p. 7)

John persists in finding ways to insert powerful and meaningful curriculum into his teaching. Veering from the district curriculum to use the movie "An Inconvenient Truth," as a springboard for informing his students and enabling their critique of corporate interests, industrial and political denial of an environment in crisis, takes courage.

This route engages and impassions John's students who, most likely, would not be given this opportunity to talk back to the system in another class. It kindles the fire that propels action, while providing the tools to act.

Additionally, in offering this alternative curriculum John is demonstrating to his students that they have the capacity to learn about and engage with large critical and current issues that concern them.

**Teaching v. bureaucracy.** To believe that you possess the power to effect change, and then experience bureaucratic stonewalling each time you attempt to execute it, seems like an

exercise in futility. Yet, this is part of John's reality. It is evident in the excerpts from my observations and interviews with him.

It was a very satisfying, enjoyable and orderly moment when the principal disrupted the class to personally announce the field trip the next day. She had forgotten to send out the fliers. From what I have observed this is consistent behavior on her part. (Obs. NB. 1, p. 27, p. 33, p. 37)

In an effort to get the kids to see outside of their little sheltered areas, we did reports, we had Hispanic Heritage Month. I had . . . the kids write about Che Guevara, Gabriel García Márquez, Pancho Villa, Cesar Chavez, Diego Rivera, Dolores Huerta, among others. I don't know if I told you, but I was very offended because our principal did not acknowledge it even though her kids are Peruvian. Her ex-husband is Peruvian. So, I was very upset. Nothing. I had my bulletin board up. We did that to expose them to Hispanic culture. Because all they know about is Mexican tacos, Mexican restaurants. (Int. 2, p. 9)

Today John is in a grumpy mood. It may have been the poorly organized assembly we just came from, entitled Lake Crest Idol a take on American Idol. It was clearly a waste of prime time morning learning, further evidence that the administration is, as John claims, incompetent. (Obs. NB 2, p. 12)

John calls her "The Rookie" because she is a first year principal with little teaching experience. It makes one wonder about the hiring process and the administration at district level. There are other indications of dysfunction in the school and district in general. One day John leaves the room to walk the kids to music class. This gives John his planning time. However, when he reaches the room the music teacher is not there. After asking around, he finds out the teacher is absent. The staff was uninformed and John lost a planning period. The principal interrupts precious learning time via intercom at least six to eight times a day for trivial matters. However, she doesn't think to inform her staff when a teacher that relieves them for planning is absent.

There is rarely ink in the copy machine, although orders for ink are placed with the school secretary repeatedly. There is funding for a full time bilingual support person, but the one they hired last year could not speak English, so she didn't understand what was going on in the

classroom. This year they hired a bilingual support person, but didn't have a plan for how to use him, so he was being used as a sub. He quit at Christmas.

John tells me that the basal program he is using with his students is approximately two years above their grade level, although the content is grade level appropriate. The district administrators chose it because they thought it would challenge the students and improve their reading. It has had the opposite effect. The kids cannot read the text, so it impacts their understanding of the content. John believes it is devastating for English Language Learners. These are but a few of John's challenges. However, the parents of John's students advocate for him.

In third grade, my first year here, I had quite a few Hispanic kids in my class, and I met the parents on the first day of school, "Hi, how are you doing?" But once they found out I was Mexican, Oh! Everything opened up and we were great. We had great conversations. Other parents would look for me. I mean even now they look for me.

"Hey, Mr. Kinzie, I need you to come do this and that." It also helped with the black families, too, because now they didn't just see me as, "Oh, that's the White guy. Oh, he a Mexican." Then, when they find out where I grew up, "Oh, he grew up in the 'hood. You know, he's alright." So all those experiences have turned in to positives for me in allowing me to relate to my students and their families. (Int1, p. 10)

John believes he has gained parents' respect by virtue of sharing a culture, a language and a neighborhood with them. They view him as a kindred spirit, someone who will understand their kids and stand by them. This notion belies the complexity at work.

What makes John different from other teachers is his deep understanding of how marginalization takes place, the reality of racism, classism, and the struggle his students will need to wage in order to take their places in the mainstream culture. He has consciously lived his life as "outsider."

**Outside influences.** Over the weeks I am stationed in John's classroom, he furtively slips me books, articles, and names of authors who have influenced his political leanings. The first

treatise is Umberto Eco's *Eternal Fascism: Fourteen Ways of Looking at a Blackshirt* (Ur-Fascism, 1995).

The second book John hands me is *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War On America* by Chris Hedges, 2007, and an article by Hedges. Next he brings in Hedges' book, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002).

If you are what you consume, then John Kinzie is one uncommon and broadly-informed guy who wears his political stripes on the outside. This is yet another version of John, and aides me in my understanding of interview responses.

Again, I think more people should read about or try to understand the great thinkers [philosophers], back when societies were smaller and easy to work with. . . . It is very upsetting to me to see the course our country has taken over the past seven years since the election was stolen. You know people's civil liberties are being taken, information being manipulated, which of course has happened throughout the history of our nation . . . I'll say the powers that be want to tout their morality. And even as they complain about the separation of church and state, the regime that's in place now is trying hard to erase that line between church and state. (Int. 2, p. 2)

And you know, people talk about institutionalized racism, institutionalized sexism, and the more I study, the more I actually see where that comes from. . . . Seeing how our society has treated different classes of people, you can understand how it would take a real genuine effort and a genuine desire to change. (Int. 2, p. 3)

This is the thinking that spurred John to assign the Great Figures in History projects. From Greek philosophers to powerful activists, his students are not just learning the Western Canon, but deconstructing it. They are learning how the history of Western Europe has shaped the society that places them.

## **Teacher Training**

Every day I join John and his colleagues in the Teachers' Room for lunch. I enjoy this time as they are a friendly bunch, including me in their conversations. John and company always

sit in the same places at the lunch table. There are other teachers, clearly not part of this circle, who sit at the opposite end. Occasionally, a conversation will stretch the length of the table.

John is the leader in his group. Even his students notice this and mention it during the focus group (FG1). He arranges trips among his colleagues to baseball games, parties, and after school outings. He leads conversations on the latest events in the school and district. In this environment, John is animated and congenial. He is apparently liked by his colleagues.

Often, if he's seen at his desk, a teacher will stop by John's room to talk while students work. The PE teacher complains to John about his use as a sub every time a teacher takes off. The kindergarten teacher comes to plan the next reading buddy date for John's class to buddy up with hers. A special education teacher comes to confide in John about another one of the principal's mishaps. John certainly seems to have the same leadership qualities he demonstrated in his teachers education program (Obs. NB. 1, p. 4).

In an interview, John talks about his teacher education.

I think for me personally, the teacher training program was—I mean, other than the actual practices and some of the overriding theories, I don't know if it influenced me very much as far as giving me the new ideas or new insights. I think what it did do was maybe validate the way I looked at things. Because it seemed very logical. A lot the theories that we learned about made sense. Some of the practices during the program didn't make sense at all. (Int. 2, p. 10-11)

I remember talking to the administration. I said, "This is ridiculous. Why the heck am I doing this?" Once I started working, it became clear how these were helpful to me. But I don't think the program itself influenced my philosophy personally.

I think because I already had pretty much of a wide—global-type view or enlightened view, it kind of just reinforced it, but I don't think it really shaped it at all.

I attended inner-city schools; I was in KPS. So, a lot of what I see reminds me of what I went through. So, I don't know if I'm drawing on those experiences or if I'm drawing on what I learned in my program.

A lot of the theories that I read about could make sense. But, you know, it's pretty close. I don't think it would be obvious for me to say that.

I think everything I learned about differentiation really helped because I came into the program with the idea of—I guess like I had been taught. This is the material; that’s it. Sink or swim. And, you know, while it kind of didn’t make sense, it was like, well, that’s the way you do it.

And then, you know, I learned about the theories and the research behind differentiating your instruction. And, again, it seemed so logical. It was like, “Well, wow, why doesn’t everybody do this?” Because even if you differentiate just a little, it’s going to help your kids so much. And I think that was like the big thing, the differentiation. (Int. 2, p. 12)

Here we see that John believes his lived experience and schooling trump his teacher education in terms of shaping his educational philosophy. John is an advocate and expert at differentiating instruction for his students. Unlike tracking, his students are placed in groups to improve or learn new skills. Once they have acquired the requisite knowledge, they are moved into a more challenging group. Thus group membership is always fluctuating.

**Authentic learning activities.** Early in the school year John motivates his students to read and write by making another connection to the world at large.

I showed you the lesson plan where we published their book reviews on Scholastic.com. I can actually find those on line and show you those. I think it was September that we actually did that, because I wanted to get their writing running right away and their reading as well. That was cool because then . . . I sent a letter home and told the parents . . . where . . . to find it. They were so excited! They were like, “Mr. Kinzie, who is going to see this?” I was like, “Well, kids across the country, if they go to the website.” “Really?! So there’s somebody in Connecticut?” You know, like it’s a whole other world! I said, “That’s right.”

There’s some kid who wants to find out about a book and he wants to know what you think. “Oh, man, that’s awesome!” So, that was really cool. They really bought into that one. (Int. 4 p. 5; Doc. 3)

Writing for an authentic purpose, and to a real audience makes a great deal of difference in the care one puts into his writing. John’s use of Internet to exhibit his students’ written reviews of books they had read serves multiple purposes. First, they have to read a book and understand it. In fact they may have to read many books before they find one they want to

recommend. This is an excellent method to get kids reading on their own. Without specifying a grade level for the books they are reviewing, John enables his students to read at their own level. This way all students can participate, and John has his students engaged in reading at the beginning of the school year.

After reading the books, the students must critique them. Since these critiques are for the purpose of being published, the students have to demonstrate good writing skills, strength in critical thinking, and an ability to engage their audience. The stakes are much higher than the normal writing assignment. The students meet the high standards, and all their reviews are published online. The students are communicating with the world. By sending the website URL to parents, students can share their stories with family members and friends across the country. Having been published gives each student the distinction of being a bona fide author, affirming his or her ability to write.

Instead of John practicing for the tests, as many teachers in similar situations are coerced into doing, John's students are engaged in an authentic writing experience. This activity improves writing skills that will be assessed on the standardized, and does so in a way that engages them and instills a sense of pride and efficacy. It also gives them a voice in the world. John and I talk about the pressure of the mandated testing.

Well the last two years I was in third grade. My kids did halfway decent. I think they'll do pretty good [this year] sic. They can do a lot better than they think they can. And I think that's been why I'm trying to push them—you know, to believe in themselves a lot more since day one. (Int. 3, p. 2-3)

John takes pride in having the highest test scores in the building. However, I believe that what really keeps John going is the idea that the student sees for himself what he is capable of doing. Although, I do not support high-stakes testing, the tests produced and scored outside the classroom, demonstrate to the students and their families that they are as capable as students

from the dominant culture. This message is essential in development of a self-identity which includes competence and confidence.

I don't want any kid that's ever come through my class to say that I didn't do enough for him, I didn't go that extra mile. I just can't have a kid that's come through my class not believing that he can do something. I don't want somebody to quit on themselves and to think that I quit on them. (Int. 2, p. 8)

### **Student Outcomes**

I am shadowing a student this morning while John is at a meeting. Currently we are engaging in Literacy Activities. We are reading *Beowulf* at a station meant for literature circles. Martin gets us right on task by providing the page number of the story from *Favorite Medieval Tales*. A group member, Germaine, noted for his inability to stay on task is being secretly supported by two group mates who believe that together they can provide the support that Germaine needs. Martin checks again with Germaine, and finds him on the wrong page. He quietly directs him back to the correct page (Obs. NB1, p.).

The students are reading round-robin style and helping each other with the difficult vocabulary they occasionally encounter. Most are reading fluently. Kevin and Martin show Germaine his section to read. Germaine begins to read the wrong passage, so Kevin immediately takes over for him. The students consistently watch over and attempt to keep him on the correct page, but Germaine is very bright, and refuses to be held back from a good story (Obs. NB 1).

A signal indicates a change of stations. My group smoothly moves to a listening center, and takes a minute to straighten out the headphones and CD. As they slide the CD into the player, they recognize that they have heard this story before. The students quietly discuss their choices, when Kevin discovers a selection that they have not yet read. As all members approve, they begin to listen to and read along with the story when a small skirmish breaks out between

Germaine and Martin. Germaine has found a pen and appears to be distracting the reading group by making annoying clicking sounds. Martin and the others decide to ignore him, and follow the story with their headphones inhibiting Germaine's noise (Obs. NB1, p. 32-33).

When John returns from his meeting he walks among the group checking on students, equipment and taking mental notes of how each child is performing in his group. At one point he sits down with a group to listen to them read (Obs. NB1, p. 33).

I am impressed by the group dynamics, as well as the accountability of each group. I am moved by the compassion they show to a struggling member, and their problem-solving independent of the teacher. They are very self-sufficient and aware of the procedures. They move from station to station deftly. There is a clear sense of self-efficacy as well as autonomy.

All stay on task, but Germaine, yet the students pick up his chores. Each puts away his or her book, then wraps the cables around the headphones and returns them to the carousel. One student unplugs mine and demonstrates how to wrap it.

**John's notion of struggle.** A thread running through observations and interviews is the notion of "struggle." Certainly John has struggled with identity and other issues throughout his life. Most notable are the links I observe between struggle and transcendence. The first time the topic came up, it was in response to a question that I had asked John. I wanted to know if he would like me to help his students. He was very reluctant about my intervening with his students' assignments. His final reply was that I could help them, but only after allowing them to struggle for a while. He informs me of the importance of his students not to look for easy answers. He wants them to stay with a problem, analyze it, think it through. He wants them to "struggle" a little bit, not to give up (Fld. Notes, 3-21-07).

Below is an example of how embedded the notion of struggle is in the day-to-day existence in John's classroom.

On the side I notice a boy lean over to a neighbor. "Man, this is hard!"

The other student looks up at him, puzzled. "I am telling you so I can help you struggle, too." (OBS. NB 1, p. 30)

The student looks up to see his teacher standing there and asks John, "Don't you ever struggle?"

Mr. Kinzie smiles as he replies, "I've got one struggle."

"I know," the student smiles back.

"Yeah, you!" The teacher and student laugh. (Obs. NB1, p. 30)

During the unit on the colonies, John inserted information on slavery in the colonies. John commandeered a DVD of a program from the Discovery Channel that was very specific to the topic. During the movie, John pulls down a map to point out the colonies referred to in the movie. Much of the movie is devoted to the lives of slaves in the colonies, as well as their significance. John indicates the trading routes on a world map while the narrator discusses the Middle Passage. Most significant is an interview of an author and historian. The discussion focuses on the slaves' rejection of slavery, and how they rebelled through even limited actions (Obs. NB. 1p. 35).

The big picture yields significant information. The readings John chooses, the people his students research and write about, conversations in the classroom focus on struggle.

I feel that in the position that I'm in, I can give these kids just that little bit of fuel that they need to get over that hump. It's not going to be easy, and we actually—I don't know how it came up. We had a little lesson on the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the kids brought up something. "Oh, well, nobody from our neighborhood ever does this," or you know, something like that. And I lost it. I said, "You know why? Because he bought into 'the man' telling him that he couldn't do it because he came from this sort of family

and this sort of neighborhood, and he couldn't do it." "Well, really? I can do it? You know, I can do this and this and this?" And we kind of outlined ways to overcome that. And I think so many people buy into that "I can't, I can't, I can't," again, because it's too hard to try and fight it. (Int. 2, p. 4)

This is not the struggle of the "Bootstrap Theory: work hard and you can make it, too." It is more about the notion of peoples of color being portrayed as victims. John demonstrates throughout his practice that these people were not passive during their exploitation; they were always struggling, working exhaustively to overcome their oppression. Moreover, they continue to struggle to overcome the invisible barriers that prevent them from accessing privilege. He discusses the importance of struggling together, and the significance of never feeling isolated (Int. 1, p. 5). He also maintains the importance of those who experience improved conditions and status staying connected to and struggling alongside those who are still marginalized (Int. 2 p. 3). Viewed in this way, John's students stand in solidarity with all marginalized populations around the world in a struggle for social justice. That is a mighty gift as well as a hefty responsibility for a fifth-grader.

This was, for me, a promising element in John's practice, and consistent in interviews, observations, and focus group interviews. Teaching about what marginalized peoples have endured at the hands of the dominant social class is devoid from most textbooks and classroom discussion. When it does appear, it often takes an apologetic tone, painting the oppressed as passive victims, then dismisses hegemonic behavior as history. John's students were engaged in discussing how those who were oppressed and exploited committed acts of resistance and dissent. He talked to his students about their own oppression, the need to struggle collectively in the classroom and later in life. Moreover, he challenged them with the responsibility of continuing to struggle with the oppressed, even after they had maintained mainstream status. (Int. 2, p. 3)

**Playing the game or changing the game?** The phone ringing in the back of the room is being ignored as John is reviewing information on the current writing form, the limerick. The students have just been introduced to it yesterday and are demonstrating their basic understanding of the form. They relate that it is 5 lines, that the first, second and fifth lines need to rhyme, and that the third and fourth lines need to rhyme. When asked what's special about it, one student calls out that it needs to include comedy. The teacher turns away from the board where he has been recording students' responses.

"That's right! The fifth line is like a punch line. It is supposed to be humorous." He pulls out the book, *The Dog Ate My Homework*. He stands as he reads the limericks moving to the rhythm. The students are laughing so hard, tears stream down their cheeks. He passes the book around allowing each student to read a limerick.

One student reads it in a flat voice. "Is that a sing-songy sound?" asks the teacher. The student rereads it melodically.

"Part of the magic of poetry is how it's read," John confides, and for the next hour I feel a little bit of magic has seeped into this tired, old room. Before turning the limerick writing over to the students, John scaffolds it, by writing the following on the board:

A There once was a pauper named Meg  
A Who accidentally broke her \_\_\_\_\_.  
B She slipped on the \_\_\_\_\_  
B Not once, but thrice.  
A Take pity on her I \_\_\_\_\_.

The students are enthusiastically calling out answers. Unfortunately they are incorrect.

"Here's another way to remember it," says the teacher. "All the As rhyme and all the Bs rhyme." Now the students are looking at it more analytically, and complete it. One student starts writing his first line, aloud: A long time ago in Japan. Students start calling out,

“There are no words that rhyme with Japan.”

“Make up a new word!” another student shouts back.

“Is that true?” the teacher questions the class, “can you make up words? What is it about poetry that allows you to do that? The developing conversation centers on “poetic license” (Obs. NB 2, p. 3).

The teacher and students are working together to make up limericks that John writes on the board. The kids are having fun, calling out words and creating new ones. The teacher opens the Internet and begins to read more limericks to the students as models.

He and the class create one together again. The teacher starts, “There once was a girl named Jill . . .” A student provides the next “A” line, “Which had a boy named Bill.” Teacher: “Okay, we have our first 2 AA lines, now we need 2 B lines.” A student calls, “They got into a big fight, and both lost their sight.” The teacher reminds the class that the last line had to rhyme with Jill or Bill. Hector finishes it with a flourish, “and then had to take lots of pills.” The teacher is clearly enjoying the students’ response to the poetry.

“Why do we use colorful language? What does it help the reader to do?” John asks. “Oh, I like the way all your hands are going up!” He selects a student. “To help the reader visualize,” the boy responds.

“Yes, that’s right.”

After a round of applause the poetry lesson continues with dramatic reading, different rhyming schemes, and finally the cultural gem, *Honey I Love*, by Eloise Greenfield (1978). She is a popular author among John’s students. They can rattle off the titles of her many books. We all settle in to enjoy (Obs. NB. 2, p. 3-5).

This vignette from John's classroom practice portrays an enthusiastic and engaging teacher; one who is skilled, resourceful and demanding. He has his students visualizing, using imagery, building on schema, using critical and creative thinking. This is a good example of John's ability to teach his kids how to play the game.

These are but a few of the many observations and narratives in John's practice that demonstrate his profound understanding of the construction of social placement and his employment of strategies to work against it in his classroom.

### **Internal Consistency: Case One**

John Kinzie's Early Formative Experience as Racialized, Later Lived Experience and Reflection On both align with his understanding of his own socially imposed placement. Further, John's Early and Later Lived Experiences and Reflection On both align with his understanding of the social, political and economic factors that create a stratified society in which people are placed.

I can make these statements as John Kinzie has expressed these statements during interviews. He has also claimed that his experiences as a biracial person have influenced his teaching. John has also criticized mandated curriculum during interviews.

Through classroom observation, I have witnessed John critiquing history textbooks with his students and supplementing the texts with CDs, DVDs, and other resources that provide counter-narratives to the texts. Here I provide an example. During lessons on the early years of U.S. history, the textbook introduced slavery. At this point, John provided supplemental information on slavery. One resource was a CD narrated by an African American citing the ways in which slaves during their transport and domination subverted the forces that restrained them.

During the ensuing discussion, he and his students discussed the notion of struggle as a means to continue to act on subjugated status. He reminded his students that if they remained passive, accepting conditions imposed on them, that they would not be able to attain good jobs and fulfilling lives. His students reiterate the fact that John corrects them so that they can get better jobs as adults.

In the observation, John discusses the concept of “struggle” and reminds his students of the importance of struggle in their lives. He contrasts struggle to passive acceptance of life circumstances imposed on them. In this way, we see John employing notions of struggle as an alternative to passivity.

The concept of struggle is reiterated throughout this case in interviews, observations, and student conversations accessed through observations. It is a major theme in Case One. An incident narrated by John provides me with insights into his teaching practice. John has shown me the lesson plans for a reading and writing activity he has taught earlier in the year. He instructed his students to select a book, read it and write a book review on it. These reviews were to be submitted to an online website that was popular with students across the country. Competing for publication online upped the ante. This means that the students had to read the book carefully, with a critical eye. Then they had to briefly summarize the book and critique it. Recognizing they are competing with other students from U.S. schools to have their reviews chosen adds challenge to this task. Finally, if it is chosen, it is published for all to see. I believe this may increase the students’ focus and care with which they must write. After all, it is a contest, and winners will be published online.

John purposely started the year with this project to engage his students in reading. They were encouraged to read several books before choosing one, and they could read at any level

with which they were comfortable. John begins the year expecting his students to read as much as possible. He scaffolds the activity by allowing students to read at their own levels. Then he raises expectations to reading critically. He ties the reading and subsequent writing activity to an opportunity for publication online making both tasks authentic, and raising the bar again. The students were excited to tell me about this experience in their focus groups. Even though it had occurred several months before I entered their classroom, students remembered it, and expressed a sense of pride in this particular accomplishment.

We see John employing good habits of mind and critical thinking in his teaching. Additionally, students are writing for an intended audience. Each of their reviews is published online reinforcing students' sense of capacity and self-esteem. John sends a letter home to parents with the website, and the parents reinforce their children's sense of ability. When the students receive responses from students in other states, across social classes and ethnicities, John's students access social capital. This is consistent with John's practice over the course of time I observed in his classroom.

In one script, John describes substitute teaching in other schools with Latino populations, where he observes a lack of respect for Latinos. He witnesses the poor treatment of Latino and Black students. An administrator confides in him, not knowing he is 50% Mexican-American, about the problems these children present to the schools.

In an interview, John communicates that it will not be easy for his students to assimilate. In preparation for succeeding in a racialized society, he talks about adopting higher expectations and an all-inclusive classroom. He relates his decision to teach skills related to student autonomy.

These are but a few of the many observations and narratives in John's practice that demonstrate his profound understanding of the construction of social placement and his employment of strategies to work against it in his classroom. The following flow chart establishes the connections between John's experiences, practices and students' observed practices and voices (see Figure 1).

Beginning at the left with formative experiences, we can see how John's experiences informed his manifest practices, the ones I observed in the classroom. I cannot assume that these practices had an impact on his students; that was not something that I could observe, and it was not addressed in the student focus groups.

However, when we move to the fourth practice I observed, the teacher's awareness of his students' social placement impacting the students' awareness of their social placement, I can align it with comments made during focus groups. I can also align it with responses from the students when John taught about slavery and struggle.

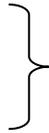
When we move to the next observed practice, John engaging his students in placement issues, a vertical arrow under student outcomes pulls down the previous outcome: students are aware of social placement. This aligns with John engaging his students in placement issues. I can look to the left to see the lived experiences that John claims shaped his teaching practice. The flow chart is a visual aid that I have used to capture John's narrated lived experience with my observations of him in the classroom. In some areas, I can link my observations of John's practices with observations of students or with actual students' dialogue in the focus groups. I did not assume connections. They came from narratives, observations and interviews. As you can see in the flow chart, the first three practices I observed in John's classroom, but did not have any evidence to directly connect them with something I heard or observed.

Formative Experiences

Manifest Practices

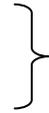
Student Outcomes

F-Rac: Racialization as Formative  
 F-EFE: Early Formative Experience  
 F-LLE: Later Lived Experience



M-TAPI: Teacher aware of own social placement

F-LLE: Later Lived Experience  
 F-Sch: Schooling as Formative



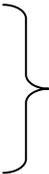
M-TASPE Sch: Teacher aware of social, political and economic influence on schooling

F-LLE: Later Lived Experience  
 F-Sch: Schooling as Formative



M-TASch: Teacher aware of role of schooling in placement

F-Rac: Racialization as Formative  
 F-EFE: Early Formative Experience  
 FSch: Schooling as Formative  
 F-LLE: Later Lived Experience



M-TASch: Teacher is aware of students social placement

→

S-StAPI Students are aware of own social placement

↓

M-EDw/St: Teacher engages with students re: placement issues

→

↓

↓

M-ActP: Teacher employs opportunities to act on placement

→

S-StActPl: Students act on placement

↓

M-CrCur: Teacher critiques curriculum, textbooks and other mandated educational materials

↓

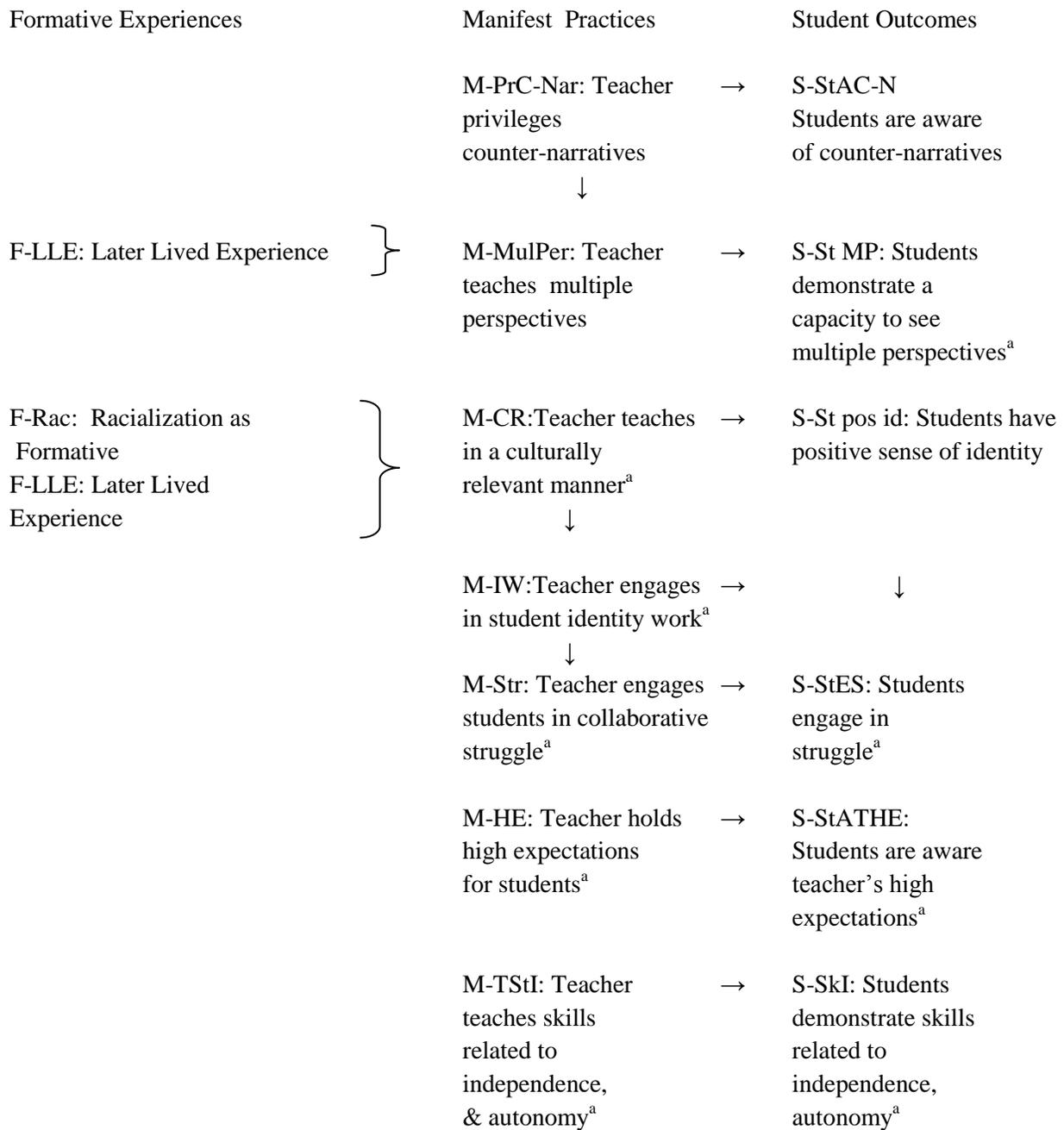
M-CDED: Teacher challenges dominant educational discourse

→

S-St ADomDis: Students are aware of dominant discourse

↓

(continued)



<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

*Figure 1. Case One: Internal consistency: Demonstrating relation of experiences, practices and student outcomes.*

## Chapter 5

### Case Two: Ron Avit

#### Lived Experience

**Introducing Ron Avit.** Locating Holy Angels School is an adventure in urban driving. Every street is one-way in the opposite direction. A new shopping center deters my entrance to the street on which the school is located. I begin in a wide circle at the edges of the industrial area surrounding the neighborhood. As I narrow down toward the school I see signs of gentrification: a coffee shop, an upscale restaurant, and finally, I hone in on the school. Then I search for parking.

The entrance of the school faces the street. Brick-framed in a gothic arch, heavy wooden doors create a welcoming entrance. I ring a bell and enter a foyer decorated with colorful children's artwork. The secretary smiles at me as if she is expecting me. The principal shakes my hand and takes me on a brief tour before she deposits me at Ron's door.

This is our first meeting, and Ron greets me with a wide grin. His students continue writing. It seems they are used to visitors. Ron and I talk with animation. I have heard stories of his extraordinary teaching and his commitment to children from friends at the Teachers Excellence Foundation. The foundation recognizes outstanding teachers across and around the large city. The award is highly esteemed. Ron and I review IRB papers, and it is time for his students' PE class. Before they line up he introduces me as a colleague from the Teachers Excellence Fellows. The students all greet me warmly.

Holy Angels School houses a pre-Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade program. It is a parochial school with a well-funded scholarship foundation to maintain 35% of its students from low-income families. The names of scholarship students remain private. Even the teachers are

uninformed of those on scholarships. The school population represents children from varied racial and cultural backgrounds: African American 21%, Arab American 2%, Asian American 8%, Bi-racial 7%, Caucasian 49%, Hispanic American 13% (school's website). Although, the cost of the school, and transportation to it, is an impediment for many families, enrolment is strong at 867 students.

After Ron drops his students off at the large, bright gym, he insists on giving me a tour. The school has been rebuilt and is only 3 years old. It is beautiful and thoughtfully designed for both children and experiential learning. Highlights of the tour include the beautiful and varied children's art work on display, some of it framed in the lobby; the drama studio complete with stage, stage lights, and curtains; the music room with semi-circular risers; and the vented science lab. All look like work spaces we might inhabit, but are shiny new and miniaturized. They appear to be designed for action, not lecture.

We revisit the large area off the foyer. On one side is a low counter behind which the secretary and her assistants are working. The rest of the area is a brightly-lit lounge with comfortable seating. As a paying parent, I would feel welcomed and comfortable here. However, I might find this space intimidating if I were the parent of a scholarship student.

The teacher's lounge is furnished with several round tables, new cushioned-chairs, and several bright red couches. It abuts a smaller room with 3 microwaves, 2 refrigerators, a sink, stove, lots of counter space and cabinets. This space speaks to the respect bestowed here on teachers. Overall, there is a quality of affluence to the school that cannot be denied.

After the quick tour, Ron introduces me to Karen, his teacher assistant. He runs off to make copies of students' writing, and leaves me to chat with Karen. She extols both the teacher and the school. Karen has 4 children who have or will attend Holy Angels. She has worked here

for 14 years. This year she works for Mr. Avit and another fourth grade teacher. Karen exudes enthusiasm.

The brief introduction of Ron Avit and his school is provided as a context for my study of Ron Avit and his teaching practice. Ron's prior experience in an urban school of historically marginalized students has earned him teaching awards. This school differs considerably from the schools at which he taught. I am here because of my interest in Ron's teaching practice.

When Ron returns, he plans with Karen. As the children arrive they will be working on writing, a skill in which Ron is deeply invested. Ron's exchange with Karen is about individual conferencing with each child, discussing the feedback from peers and family members on a particular piece of writing. They divvy up students, then discuss certain children and the progress each has made. As he talks about the elements of revising, he decides to make a chart (Obs. NB 1, p. 2).

Witnessing the interaction between Ron and Karen, I note that each is aware of individual student's progress in writing. In the short time they meet, Ron shares the goal for the next lesson, which is conducted through individual conferences. As he talks through the lesson, Ron decides to make a chart that will serve as a posted guide that children can refer to as needed. This offers an opportunity for student autonomy as the chart acts as a scaffold for children needing a reminder.

The following narrative serves to introduce Ron in a different context, from his early years on.

### **Ron's early lived experience.**

I start thinking about my parents and about the ways they've raised us, things that I appreciate about them more now. My parents always ate dinner with us. . . . I remember . . . my dad always telling us stories when we were younger, about his life. His father died when he was really young in the war in the Philippines. He was killed by the

Japanese. So he had to be the one who was going into the water, spear fishing, in order to sell fish. One time he almost drowned. Another time, he was selling newspapers in order to raise money for his family and to buy a car . . . when I was a kid, you just sort of hear these things. But I could tell just by the responses from my older siblings, that they were really thinking about them. (Int. 1, p. 1-2)

In this first interview I discover that Ron is Filipino American, and although he seems to identify with his culture, he never speaks of this component of his identity directly. I was unaware of Ron's cultural background prior to this first meeting.

From this quote I perceive a sense of Ron's family's values. His narrative highlights the significance of "family" and storytelling. Ron is influenced by his father and his father's lived experiences. Initially, he merely enjoys listening to the stories, eventually they become lessons on living.

Ron continues his narrative.

Now they make more of an impression on me. I see my dad after coming to America, and my mom as well. . . . We start talking about these experiences of their life when they were younger, compared to now. (Int. 1, p. 2)

Ron's family and their values are very important to Ron. He talks about them at length. As he narrates, he is also reflecting on these stories. As Ron grows, he begins to learn from his parent's experiences. He acknowledges the courage it takes to start a new life in a foreign country, to educate oneself, to care for a family. In one of many narratives, Ron discusses his father's former position as a surgeon on a Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation. In exchange for his medical scholarship, Ron's dad was placed there for a period of 6 years. He stayed for 20 (Fld. Notes, p. 1). I find this story as an important one in Ron's life, as it coincides with a statement Ron makes later about committing to and staying with a community of need.

Ron reminisces about his mother during an interview.

My mom would always go . . . to the church and help to clean up. Or, she'd have me iron linens that were going to the church and go and put flowers. She always did these things

. . . she never got paid, she just did them. I remember she'd be tired at times. "It's just part of being a part of a community or a part of just being a good person." I know faith was a big part of that. Your service to others is your service to God . . . you do everything well and you don't count the cost with it. Those are the kinds of thoughts and messages that I'm getting from home about these kinds of things. (Int. 1, p. 3-4)

This narrative reinforces the family's values as it focuses on the actions that Ron's mother engages in while he is growing up. She involves young Ron in service to their faith-oriented community. I emphasize the phrase "you do everything well and you don't count the cost," as it is significant in this context. Not only is one expected to serve, but one is expected to perform that service well. The quality of how you serve is as important as the service itself. This notion of benevolence recurs in Ron's narratives, and is at the core of his extended family as well.

Big experience that I remember, was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. My parents took me to the Philippines for my grandparents' 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. My grandparents had invited everybody from their village. And it was—even the people in the streets, who are poor. My grandfather had all of them sitting at tables. He had all of us who were in the wedding party serving people at the table. We made all these paper bags. We put rice in them and . . . provisions. My grandfather, had a free clinic open up for the people there, because my dad is a doctor. We were all doing all this preparation. I just remember like walking through the wedding [anniversary celebration] seeing people. "There's a lot of strangers here." My mom gave me Polaroid camera, "I need you to go and take pictures, and then, you give these pictures to every person that's here." I was taking pictures, and I was giving it to them. And then, I was seeing people just so intrigued by this and so happy about it. That really left an impression on me. This was my grandparents, anniversary time, and they did this whole thing to sort of teach all the rest of in our family like what it means to—to serve other people and to make other people enjoy life and other people to feel like they are worth something . . . my grandparents had told me about how to treat other people, how to think about other people. . . . They showed us one huge example of how to do that. (Int. 1, p. 2)

The occasion of Ron's grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, and mode of celebration, is a significant incident in Ron's early life. This story contributes to a better understanding of the environment in which Ron is raised. I note several factors: some

humanitarian, some faith-based, and some cultural. On a humanitarian level, this celebration appears to be altruistic.

As devout Catholics, service is the cornerstone of Ron's family's beliefs. This is something one simply does, for in serving anyone, one is serving God. Through faith, one's consideration should be the well-being of all. Finally, Ron was compelled to tell me that he thought his grandparents' anniversary purposely involved the entire family as a lesson in love and service.

In addition to the notion of family, values and service, is the conception of community, not as a boundary, but as an inclusive group of people. These experienced values have impacted Ron and his identity.

**Serving others—Serving self.** Ron refers to his middle school years.

In about 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, in my own community, [I asked] "What can I do here?" The service . . . drew me to a lot of things. I don't know if it was because my parents had me doing things like this at an early age. But I think I realized how, at a young age, you can have something that makes such an impression on you and then makes you feel that you can do something. At the same time it makes you feel like you're a part of something bigger. You're a part of other people's lives.

My mom would drop me off at the nursing home, and, I'd go and watch movies with people or play games . . . I'd go and interview them and write up some of their stories in the school newspaper. I just loved hearing people talk, the things that they had to say. But it was that whole idea of everyone feeling valued and feeling that they are something, that there's this worth there. (Int. 1, p. 2-3)

In this narrative, Ron begins to seek out opportunities for engaging in community service on his own. Simultaneously he recognizes service as central to his way of living. Ron cites his parents' influence on this value.

This aligns with theories provided by Bembow's (1994) dissertation about the formative experiences of activists. She found that their tendency, even at an early age, was to be drawn to

something they believed to be good and true. These children were raised in families instilled with an “ethos of goodness,” and transcended even that to an independent passion for justice.

In this specific incident, Ron engages in something more profound than charitable service. It is deeply insightful and dignifying. It is a way of cherishing. Likely, over years of being encompassed by his family’s powerful acts of love, Ron embraces the same beliefs and carries out the same actions. While this in itself is an extraordinary inheritance, the actions provide meaning and value in Ron’s life. As a sidebar, I believe that engendering this feeling in adolescents counters tendencies toward nihilism amongst children of this age in our culture (Epstein, 2007).

I am impressed by the way in which the young Ron engages the elderly. He seems to intuitively recognize the need for the elderly to see themselves as they once were: vital, having lived purposeful lives. Our elders need to recall and retell their lived experiences in order to regenerate themselves and their own sense of participation in history. Often, stories are told and retold, but rarely heard. Ron’s service is active listening: showing interest in an elder’s personhood in his prime, asking questions about a lived life and finally honoring these individuals by writing their stories for them as articles in his school newspaper. Students gain a chance to vicariously experience an account of personal history, while the nursing home resident’s story is legitimized in print.

I believe we glimpse Ron’s awareness of a specific need in his own community, and his ability to address it in both an authentic and creative manner. I view this as a critical moment in Ron’s trajectory.

Ron begins to perform service in other countries.

In freshman year, I [took] a trip to Mexico . . . [with] a volunteer component to it. We were in Casa Jogarde San Pablo, an orphanage for kids had big health issues and

deformities. They don't . . . just let you be with the children. I remember sweeping in one of their new renovated areas there. I wanted to be with people and with kids. I got used to the idea that I was just sweeping and helping out. They finally opened up this door and called the kids that were in this room. The nuns . . . were taking care of each of these kids . . . changing diapers. . . . Off to the corner and there was this one baby in this little rocker thing . . . really quiet . . . really weak. The nun . . . pulled me over. She was speaking in Spanish, "I need you to feed Peter over here." He was just the most adorable thing . . . I tried to feed him, and his mouth would just barely open. He had this tube that was going into his stomach, and I didn't know quite what was wrong at the time. They taught me how to change him and then I would just hold onto him. I still have a picture that my friend took of me, holding him and just sort of staring at his eyes for the longest time. It was just an incredible feeling. I always say he came at such a great time. It was my freshman year, and I remember writing a piece one day that, "Little Pedro Saved Me from Myself." There was a time when I was going into myself so much, and only thinking what is it that sort of makes a big difference and what is it that I'm truly wanting to do? So, I remember that being a big moment for me in terms of service. (Int. 1, p. 3)

This narrative marks the passage of Ron's journeys to serve outside his own community. It is not as consistent as the others in terms of Ron's belief in giving without "counting the cost." Ron's trip to Mexico has two purposes: first, to see the sites, and second, to engage in volunteer work. Casa Jorgade San Pablo is an orphanage for children who are critically ill or are less likely to be adopted due to a physical aberration or handicap. However Ron's word choice is "deformities," which has a negative connotation. Perhaps Ron needed to see beyond those features before he is able to actually nurture and work with the children.

In this script, I find Ron's ideas of service as somewhat self-indulgent for the reason that he focuses more on the impact of his services to his emotional well-being, than on the results of his service to the recipient. For example, I was left wondering how little Pedro fared after Ron left. I revisit this theme in response to Ron's narrative on service.

Ron travels to India.

It was called "Sahoday," and it stood for "rising together." This school had everyone from all castes coming to the school. So, kids that were very well off, to kids that would never go to school, together in one school. It was the vision of this one sister. I got a sense of kids that were really passionate and aware of the world around them. They really did challenge me—they started talking about things. "Why is this happening?" These

were 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> graders. “You know what? You guys have a gift because you are thinking about this and are pushing this.” To be honest, in America, most of us don’t even know what’s going on in other parts of the world. That was impressive, to be amongst the kids. I think at that point, I got that sense of really stepping aside and caring what kids had to say and what they thought were solutions or what had to be done. It was amazing, hearing them and organizing things for them. That was one of the first times I really got a big teaching bug was being around those kids.

I also got to visit them in their homes. I was put out of my comfort zone I didn’t know how to get around New Delhi As long as I was there, I couldn’t even trace what block I was going to. These kids would invite me to their homes, and I wouldn’t know how to get there. They would ride the rickshaws with me, and we’d be going around the city streets of New Delhi, and I couldn’t speak any Hindi. I got this young guy that’s riding around, telling the guy where to go. Gosh, here I am, totally dependent on this kid and being okay with that. I keep telling my sisters and brothers anytime you can get your kids out, they come back seeing the world differently. They learn to question things more and not just settle for what they see on TV all the time. Because they see a whole other side of life. (Int. 1, p. 5)

Sahoday School in New Delhi, India is a notable international school of children from all castes being educated together, elites taking classes with untouchables. It is unusual for an Indian school. Ron was fortunate to have had an experience there. Ron cannot speak Hindi so he is totally dependent on Sahoday’s students when he leaves the compound. This is Ron’s first account in his narrative where he admits he feels “out of his comfort zone.” Perhaps this is a singular incident in which Ron feels he has no control over his circumstance. He recognizes the moment for what it is, a huge leap in faith and understanding, and he comes to terms with this feeling.

Sahoday also influences Ron’s thinking about the knowledge base of American school children. He ascertains that the Indian children know much more about America than American children know about India. He also notes that the Indian children seem to have an innate passion about the world at large and its many issues. He wishes that he could infuse that enthusiasm and questioning spirit into American students. In fact, he wishes that he could inculcate the concept of “getting out of yourself, getting out of what you think and what you know.”

In a later interview, Ron speaks of the experience at Sahoday and a more critical way of teaching. He believes that this is one of the pieces of his practice that he continues to hone. This particular narrative is permeated with emotion, yet devoid of the act of “service.” In introducing the narrative, Ron relates his trip to Sahoday as a service project. He was going there to teach English. He comes away from Sahoday energized and filled with ideas for his own practice.

### **Teaching in India.**

I went to Mexico, . . . and Jerusalem. Years later I went to New Delhi, India, and taught English there. That was very enlightening for me because I just didn’t think I saw the world the same afterwards. Things that seemed big, weren’t a big deal. I think it’s just learning how to see things from a totally different perspective, that instead of seeing a lot of deficiency, there’s a lot of wealth there. (Int. 1, p. 4)

In this passage Ron shifts from “tourist” to a more integral way of being with the people. He positions himself differently, and begins to perceive with more of a participant perspective. Rather than pointing out deficiencies (or deformities), he begins to see alternative forms of “wealth.” There is also less focus on his emotional well-being from having participated. This is more in alignment with Paulo Freire’s work training teachers to teach reading in Brazil (1974). Freire was not only interested in teaching the technical component of reading, but rather in changing the attitudes of the teachers to enable them to act in dialogue with the learners.

### **Cherry Creek Reservation.**

I’ll never forget when I went on an alternative spring break trip. I took a group from Northern State over to Cherry Creek Reservation in South Dakota. We went to a YMCA. The undergraduates wanted to do something, so they organized. “Let’s go out, bring out garbage bags, and we’ll clean up and pick up trash, and we’ll bring the kids around with us.” So, we went out. I said, alright without even consulting the people there. We went out and were picking up the trash. Kids came out and they were helping us out. There’s that one moment where I think the group felt like, “Oh, my gosh, we’re doing such good work here. We’re cleaning up. The kids are out. We’re being role models.” And then, we had this mother who came as a representative, and she laid it out there. She said, “I don’t need you to pick up the garbage in my community.” And it really hit everyone. Cause everyone is thinking, “Oh, wow I’m doing such a great job here.” And she said, “You know what? Our community can take care of itself. There are things that we can do. Do

you know that we know how to do this? This is what we need from you. You have certain expertise of how goods get out to the rest of the world. How can we get these things that we're making, we're doing, our culture out to the rest of the world? Because they need to understand us." She said, "You are at a university. You know how this is supposed to work? That's what we need from you. We need you to help our culture continue and thrive and grow here where we're at. We don't need you picking up our garbage, and we don't want our kids feeling like an outsider is coming and cleaning our house." I thought it was a great moment for all these undergrads who were in different fields to hear that. I feel like that was a big moment just to get a sense of really thinking about what is my role? What am I looking to do? How do you learn in a community? How do you address some of these things without being the one who's fixing everything? (Int. 2, p. 5)

In retelling this story, Ron demonstrates a conceptual leap in his notion of service. It is the most compelling of all Ron's stories because the response to his work was unexpected by him. It was dissonant with his perception of service. There is a tension between what he expects and what actually takes place. This causes him to deeply rethink his charitable actions.

Its universality also adds to the poignancy of this story. Often, it is with the best intentions, but gross ignorance, that we assume the type of assistance a community, culture or country other than our own, needs or desires. The words of this Sioux mother stuns the volunteers as she reprimands, "We don't need you picking up our garbage, and we don't want our kids feeling like an outsider is coming and cleaning our house."

As we rush in to "help," we make assumptions, often incorrect assumptions, about what is actually needed. I think we do this every time we reconstitute a school, rezone a school district, or "transform" education for a community without asking and listening to the community members' voices. "What do you want for your kids? How should it take place?" Once again, this resonates with Freire's (1974) idea of a non-hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the student, and the significance of dialogue as necessary to the relationship.

Ron admits that this transformed the way he viewed service, and in particular service projects at his university.

At Northern State, I was part of community service group, and we had this discussion of community service. There was this backlash against direct service versus organizing it. Or, that you can't just have service without advocacy involved, and you can't have it without community development. Because all it is, is like this glass half empty, half full. You're always treating a community as if it's half empty, if it's always direct service. We're going to come in and we're going to fix things. And then, having that discussion in undergrad and these two experiences, I started piecing things together. The doctor model is I'm the one who is looked to, to fix something. I'm the one who is there to diagnose. I go in. I write a chart. These are the meds. Go in, say "Hi, are you feeling better?" And then, I leave, and, it's very much this one-sided thing. It's not like, "Can you help me, or can you"—I mean, I think a patient does advocate for himself, but they're in a very vulnerable situation. So, this power differential is already set up. Whereas I felt in a classroom setting, it's very different. It's this very even sense of I'm picking up things from these kids. They're giving me something. I'm learning things. They're pushing me in a way to think about things and see the world in a different way, as much as I'm pushing back on them. So, I think that it's like the moment when that kind of conversation happened at Northern State. (Int. 2, p. 3)

This succinct memory of the moment provides me with insight into Ron's beliefs about service that I believe extend into his teaching practice. Through my observations and student focus group's data we see a more student-centered view, one in which the teacher views students as being in possession of knowledge. Ron defers to some extent to the students' knowledge, whatever form it may take: street smarts, proficiency, talent, and expects that he will learn from them. It is noble and empowering to the students, yet simultaneously overwhelming, as the onus of knowing is not confined to the teacher, but individual students, as well. Ron's capacity for believing in students' rich prior knowledge and the concept of socially constructing knowledge is central to his teaching practice.

The incident at the Cherry Creek Reservation is pivotal to Ron's change in notion of service. This is the first time he questions his conceptualization of service. It is one of the few times he conveys his service without mentioning his own emotional benefits. The concept of a delivery service model conflicts with a model that engages and empowers the community to use their resources and extract only the service, information or expertise that they need. It is a win-

win model. Those in service to the community can assist and empower many more communities by enabling the community to articulate what it wants or needs from the service provider.

The difference in Ron's thinking is evident in his discussion of community services, and is central to his budding teaching practice. It demonstrates the need for advocacy tied to sensitivity to and respect for the expertise inherent in the community. This idea becomes embedded in Ron's worldview and teaching philosophy.

One of Ron's reflections on his own service speaks about everyone feeling valued and worthy. It speaks of the need for all of us to sustain a sense of worth. It additionally refers to how, when in service to others, Ron maintains his sense of worth. It extends to how, when Ron's students are in service to others, they experience a similar sense of worth. I find this to be one of the overarching themes and tensions in Ron's work: in serving others, you are also serving your own innate human need to feel compassionate and efficacious. In Ron's case, serving others, means serving God, and although he refers to the joy he receives from serving, the act of service itself is central. This becomes increasingly evident in Ron's narrative. In fact, his first formal interview, a response to, "What are some of your early formative experiences?" is an eight page, single-space document almost entirely about his family and the service experiences in which he has engaged.

## **Observing Ron**

**From revising to re-envisioning.** "You're revising your work through the eyes of your reader. That's why it is important to go to classmates and ask them to read your piece to give you feedback. I saw some of you doing that yesterday. How many of you have done that? How many have gotten good feedback?" There's a show of hands in response to both questions.

All of you are the owners of your work. You make the decisions about your piece. People may make suggestions. You decide whether or not to accept them. Here's another chart for when you're completed. Feel free to go back and forth between these charts. So as soon as you are completed typing, reading and beaming (to printer), you'll work on this revising stuff.

One student takes out an Alpha Smart Key Board. Others pull out writing notebooks to continue writing. The teacher is talking to students about specifics in their stories. There is a buzz in the classroom as students begin to settle in to their particular project. Two girls are at one computer rereading before printing. One girl is reading to a peer for feedback. Two students are at computers in the back of the room. Most are still in the stage of transferring their stories to the Alpha Smarts.

Ron sits alongside a student, silently reading the boy's story. "There are so many strong elements," Ron tells the boy.

"I'm going to do more to my climax," the student replies.

"Can you tell me where you think your climax is? Would you say that's where the most important things are happening?"

The boy responds positively.

"Then here's where you'll work?" asks the teacher. "What will you do?"

"I want to add more details."

"Any interesting things you might want to experiment with in this piece, like dropping clues, instead of telling? Making your readers work?"

The student agrees to think about the idea. The teacher moves to another student, waiting for feedback on her story.

"Well, what do you think?" Mr. Avit asks the fourth-grader.

“It’s okay,” replies the student, “but I think it feels a little too resolved, so I’m thinking about adding another vignette.”

“In what spot and why?” Mr. Avit asks.

“In here, because she’s getting tired of being bossed around,” states the writer.

“Oh, so a scene that shows her standing up for herself? I prefer this story to your first draft. What inspired you?”

The student responds, “I really like history, and it really helped when Robert’s mother came in. And that’s what we’re reading about in the Immigrant Book.”

“I have a book on Ellis Island that may help you with your character,” the teacher offers. Here’s the book and we’ll also be talking about different waves of immigration. This may give you a sense of dates. I remember you asking me about dates.”

The teacher moves on.

“Jane, oh so you decided to take this part out? Why?”

“Well, I thought it didn’t fit there,” Jane replies.

“I am so glad that you did that. I think your story is stronger. Where did you get the idea for your story?” asks Mr. Avit.

“Remember when we talked about writing about high school even though we haven’t been there yet?”

“So, where did you get the information?” the teacher inquires.

“From my cousins,” Jane replies.

“So the character is based on your cousins? Can you read me an example?”

“I’ll read the little sister part about Ryan.” The student reads.

“That’s personal experience,” Mr. Avit confirms.

“Yea, Grace and Mary.” Jane smiles.

“You did talk about the subject. Remember when we talked about what happened to the character?”

“Yea,” says Jane, “She was moody and crabby. She had mood changes.”

“ You might want to develop the character more. What could you tell me about the character?”

“She won’t be bratty.”

“Do you have a nice older cousin?”

“Yes.”

“Keep her in mind as you write this character. What is she like?”

“She is nice to me. She talks to me and plays with me.”

“Is ‘Mary’ like that?”

“Yes.”

“So use that. I’ve got a sense of Mary, but was wondering how she looked.”

“Yes. I have that in my writer’s notebook.”

“Great! Pull that out again so that you can give a sense of the external. When I was reading it I pictured you. Does Mary look like you?”

“No.”

“So pull that out again for that external character. Nice job. Great story line!”

From 10: 30 to 11: 00 a.m. Ron and Karen have conferred with eight students each on their writing. As they meet with a student they update the student’s note card on his or her writing progress. Later, the two will meet to review the cards, pull up the cards of students they will confer with tomorrow, and follow up on any students that need extra help.

Ron is a writer. He's been writing seriously since grade school, and has kept all his notebooks, journals, and essays to prove it. From time to time, he will bring one in and share it with his students so that these fourth graders are familiar with the fourth grade version of their teacher. Ron views writing as a creative process and is passionate about it (Int. 2, p. 8).

Each student in this class is considered a writer. This fact is reinforced later, in the Student Focus Group. I watch as students pull out their writing notebooks during the day to capture an idea. Ron sees them as apprentices, practicing their trade. Their writing takes on purpose in this context, rather than performing random writing assignments. "We write to know," Ron informs them. Again, I am considering the invisible scholarship kids. I see each kid taking this role very seriously, so I can only assume that this is working for them, as well (Field Notes, p. 8).

### **Observing Ron in Practice**

Ron begins a lesson on metacognition, using students' work as exemplars and assigning competence to individuals.

"Humans perform such amazing tasks, like a baby learning to walk, that we don't realize just how astounding it is. Fourth graders write and often write amazing things without knowing that they are amazing." He reads aloud an opening from a student's writing.

"Keep going!" shouts a student.

"What do you think of this story?" Ron asks. "Does it give you a sense of the character?" He picks up another. "This one is an experiment in form." He reads a passage.

"Wow! That was really good!" exclaims a student.

“Aggie took one of our ‘qualities of good writing’ and used a ‘hook’ to write a great opening,” Ron responds. He reads a few more, pointing out their strengths (Obs. NB1, p. 3).

“I want to take this moment to tell you how your stories have changed so much since the beginning of the year. Remember ‘Once upon a time . . .’ and ‘There was . . .’?”

The students giggle and nod their heads (Obs. NB1, p. 4).

**Visible kids with invisible status.** This passage exemplifies Ron’s extraordinary skill at assigning competence to his learners. Rather than selecting samples from a book, he seeks examples in his students’ work. He is very specific about what the student author actually excelled at. In doing so Ron is acknowledging an individual’s competence both publicly and explicitly (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Lotan, 2004). This builds students’ self-confidence while providing an expert consultant in residence for his peers. Throughout my time in his classroom, Ron established the competence of his students in meaningful ways.

Assigning competence is an excellent strategy for all students, but it is especially important to students who have been marginalized by race or class. If this practice is used consistently, the student begins to see his own expertise. If one’s competence is acknowledged publicly, peers begin to seek him out. This is a practice that empowers students, and in that way it is a practice performed both critically and consciously. It is a form of critiquing a skill or competency at which a student is genuinely adept. The teacher must be aware of when the student is performing this skill, and calling attention to his or her performance in a public, but personally respectful manner.

Ron enjoys assigning expertise to his students. He reminds me that he does not give kids competence; he “assigns” it as the student demonstrates it. He claims that he sees more confidence, more of a sense of independence, and as a result, more risk-taking. He also sees the

underlying status or classroom rank between students transformed. He witnesses it in their interactions with each other. I wonder if classroom rank may have anything to do with socio-economic status which is purportedly invisible in this school. Despite what I have been told, status is apparent to me through name-brand clothing, experiences students bring to the classroom, and the models of cars from which they descend every week day morning.

**Classroom journeys.** “I know you have spent a lot of time thinking about your journeys, so I am going to pass an atlas to each table. The states are in alphabetical order,” Ron explains to the students seated at their tables. They are beginning an activity Ron calls “Journeys.” It has a social studies focus on regions of the U.S., but integrates skills from multiple disciplines in a seamless and strategic way. Students begin by choosing a state, but must be prepared to articulate a rationale supporting their decisions.

“Boys and girls, leave your journals and atlases at your tables. Come and sit on the carpet. I want you to tell me about your conversations.”

Harper is going to Montana because she loves nature and hiking. Jeremy tells the class that he is going to Tennessee because he had to make a brochure and was assigned Tennessee, and he thought it was really interesting.

The teacher asks, “How many of you were inspired by our region brochures? How many of you were inspired by the parents’ presentation on regions?” There is a show of hands after each question. “Any other journeys?”

Katie: “I like the idea of California because of the diversity of people. It has Asians and Mexicans.”

John chooses Rhode Island for its history, and Jamie likes history but doesn’t want to base his whole trip on that one factor. So he chooses California because it has history and nature.

Jeremy tells John that he has been to Rhode Island, so he could tell him some cool places to go. Katie suggests that the teacher to put up a chart, and everyone could write down his or her name and the state that they are visiting. If someone has already been to that state, she could help the person.

Mr. Avit acknowledges the great idea and begins to facilitate the process. “If you’re interested in going to a certain place, I’m going to get a list of places where one of you might have been. This way we can use each other as experts. Make sure you can say something about the place. That it wasn’t just a stopover in an airport. If you have brochures or pictures at home you may bring them in to share them tomorrow.”

Jonas knows about Indiana because he has a house there. Annie knows about Michigan because she has a lake house there. John has been to Washington, Virginia, South Carolina and Florida. Katie has been to Maui and informs the class that the people there like to hike and fish.

By the time the chart is filled we discover that Shania goes to ice skating camp in Lake Placid every year, Chris skis in Breckenridge every winter where his family has a home, and Ruth has a house on Long Island. The privilege among students in this classroom is evident. However, the information provided does enable students to act in roles as experts as Mr. Avit gives students time to share their knowledge with those who desire it.

In this component of Ron’s practice is a tension that I see at play in this school. One cannot be blind to the socio-economic status of his students if one wants to teach and acknowledge the whole child. Withholding information on scholarship students from teachers is the same as withholding the child’s life and experiences. Ron claims that he came to teaching because he wanted to witness and engage with children in a holistic way.

While students talk about their vacations and experiences, there are children who remain silent. I am guessing that these are children who have never been out of their state. How can they share their expertise in this assignment? How could Ron have made this assignment one in which all children could claim expertise? This is a dilemma in which he must continually engage. I begin to think about when and how notions of social placement come into play: at the Book Fair that was being held while I was visiting; during Parent-Teacher conferences; when there is a field trip. These are instances when socio-economic disparity is most likely to make itself known.

### **Ron Describes His Teaching Stance**

I think, you know, even now, one of the big draws for me is this whole idea of how do you get kids to experience—to develop this sort of empathy for some real issues that are happening? I like them to be like those kids that I taught in India, where they were so passionate about it, and it genuinely sprung from them. But I can't fault them if they don't have any personal kind of connections. So, that goes back to me. I keep challenging myself. To me, it's like why does it matter? Why should it matter? And so, asking kind of like "What is the purpose behind it?" So, trying to think about that, and then, how do you do that like in a developmentally appropriate way too? (Int. 1, p. 8).

I would love to be able to take kids out to like different places. And that's what I'm sort of hoping with the new school is that we'll be getting kids out to the community and they see different parts and maybe critically examine what's happening in their own communities. But there's so many other ways, like through literature. You choose a certain kind of literature, or through dramatizations or what not. There are ways that kids can experience it. So, when I think of like stepping out, I think of that whole experience part, and I think that's my best experience component—it becomes so important. And I know it's sort of thrown out there like experiential learning kind of thing, but to me, there's something about it. There's the getting out of yourself, getting out of what you

think and what you know, being critical. So, I think at least that's what I'm trying to hone my teaching to become, I think. (Int. 1, p. 8)

One of Ron's tensions is how does a teacher open the eyes of fourth graders to see the issues in the world, especially in a developmentally appropriate way. He wants his students to have the passion that he sees in the kids in Sahoday. It seems he feels thwarted to take any action that would induce the kind of fervor, knowledge and curiosity that he experienced among the children at Sahoday. Additionally, he keeps asking himself why it is important to develop this passion for knowing the world. Yet it seems monumentally important to him. Clearly this is a real and personal dilemma.

Then, as if answering his own question, he discusses the expeditionary model he is using for the charter school: critically examining the community. My question is, why doesn't he do it at Holy Angels, a school where the teachers develop their own units.

Ron believes that all children, regardless of background, should have the types of formative experiences he has had. At one point he expresses how he could see the experiences he chose forming him and leading him to where he is now. He believes that taking students into "foreign" environments will result in them having more empathy for others as well as new and varied perspectives. He speaks of the need for students to get out of themselves, out of what they think, out of what they know, before they can be critical. He also claims to be attempting to hone his teaching toward this goal.

I went to Jerusalem a couple of times. And there, it was—I think there was more of the cultural things that I did, and just belief too. I think religious belief, and some of the challenges with that. I just remember being on the airplane, and one Jewish girl who was just about my age, who was just so passionate about how the land was theirs. And then, you go over there and see the split. That whole city is just divided, yet each one has such a strong faith that they can move mountains with it. Again, it helped me at least ask the question, "What's going on here?" I mean, these are real conflicts and real challenges that, you know, can't be answered. They strike at the core, I think, of individuals at a very personal level. I think I grew in more of an appreciation of that. When you go to Catholic

schools all the time, you think that only Catholics are the ones who hold onto something very strongly. I think I grew in appreciation of people who are Islamic. They are very pious. They have very strong rituals and a strong belief system. The same [is true] with the Jewish tradition that was there, too. I tell my kids that. Even in regular class, as a way to teach them some reverence. It's like Ghandi said, "If I did believe that Jesus was in the Tabernacle or my God was in the Tabernacle, I would be in front of that thing 24/7." So, it is a matter of faith. For the kids it's like, "Oh, yeah, if I were to step out of myself right now and not take this for granted, how would I treat this situation?" I think that was of value . . . being able to try to see things from different perspectives. (Int. 1, p. 7)

Ron believes these trips changed his life, and in doing so, changed the way he thought about education. He feels it is imperative that students learn to see things from a variety of perspectives. He believes that they should be taught to step outside themselves and look with different lenses on another's culture or circumstance. However, I also perceive Ron taking a closer inspection of religion and faith. He seems surprised by the piety of the Muslims and the strength of the Jewish convictions. When teaching catechism in the Catholic school system, he insists on teaching respect for all faiths, including Islamic, Hindu and Judaism. This may not have been the case had Ron not experienced these faiths firsthand.

Ron also wants to instill a passion about the world, and the many people that inhabit it. He believes that working in a school of need requires more from a teacher. It takes passion and willingness to become involved in other parts of students' lives. He believes too many people neglect to recognize the social context of marginalized students' lives. A successful teacher of these children must provide space in his classroom for family and social life. Activities that don't take place during the school day need to be made available after school.

Ron claims one needs to earn the respect of students and their families, to build relationships with them, to be there for them. He says a teacher needs to genuinely enjoy his students, and that it is imperative for parents and students to know you'll be there for the long haul, that you will stay, commit. This actually aligns with an earlier narrative in which Ron

recalls his father's 20 year commitment to a Sioux Medical Center. Here we see a link between his formative experiences and his beliefs about teaching.

Ron wants his students to feel the power of communication, so that they can write for lots of purposes, including their own. He wants his students to enjoy reading for many purposes, and to be able to have questions of their own. They don't need to be looking for all the answers, but they must have their own questions. He wants his students to have positive self-concepts and confidence in who they are and what they know. He wants his students to be advocates for themselves, and to ask for extra assistance if they need it.

Mr. Avit wants a curriculum that grows in dialogue with the school and community. He wants to move away from textbook-dominated curriculum to integrated units of inquiry. He wants to develop critical thinkers. He also wants to explore ways for teachers to articulate their needs and support each other.

**Deciding to teach.** During an interview I ask Ron when he made the conscious decision to teach.

I felt like I was going to go ahead and teach. Throughout college, I don't think I ever really connected . . . that I would go into teaching. "Mom and dad, I think I want to be in pediatrics." . . . there was a time in junior and senior year when I was doing volunteer work in the hospital. I was a phlebotomist. I would go up to the Peds unit, and . . . draw blood from the kids. I would also just observe. I started to imagine my life doing that, imagining what it would be like to be looking at charts, seeing kids maybe for a weekend or just 2 weeks. I remember the feeling of when I would teach CCD (Catholic Religion Education), how I was with these kids all year. I see them at their best. I see them when they're very creative, and I can step back and be like, "Wow, that was really neat, what we did together." (Int. 2, p. 3)

Ron also talks of the role of doctor as "fixer," a person one would not see consistently, only when one was in need of "repair." Ron knew that he wanted to be in a position of service in which he would have long term relationships with people, especially children. He also wanted the relationship to be interactive, which was something he could not derive from sick children.

Many of his service experiences involved children, so although Ron did not have a degree in education, he decided to earn one. He said he wanted to do something meaningful with his life (Fld. Notes, p. 2).

### **Ron's Teacher Education Program**

Northern State had the Inner City Catholic Teachers program. The one thing that drew me to Inner City Catholic Teachers was they had this community aspect to it. Coming also from a Catholic background, I wasn't adverse to one of their core values which was community and a sense of spirituality. And I thought that was something that was important for me to continue with through education. (Int. 2, p. 6-7)

In this piece of narrative we see that Ron carefully chooses his teacher education program to match his values and beliefs. This is important in Ron's case, because we see an alignment here with Ron's stated beliefs from his other formative experiences. So it begs the question, how much does teacher education influence or impact the formation of teachers? It also draws attention to the fact that one may choose a program because it aligns with values from earlier lived experiences.

We did the summer, which was a real crash course. We learned basic, technical skills. We taught in a summer school at St. Barbara, which is on the west side. I had 8 students and was paired with a mentor over a six-week period. I didn't have the experience to situate it all. We were also taking a math pedagogy class and reading over at Northern State. So, we were planning lessons to teach in summer school to kids. So, that was like Monday through Thursday. And then, Fridays we'd go to Northern State. We'd have an all-day kind of professional development in either math or reading. At the same time, we had to put together sort of a mini portfolio of what we were doing over the summer, and then, we submitted that. We took the basic teacher tests. And then, throughout the year, we had to compile entries for our portfolio. I want to say once a month we met on Wednesdays to do class at St. Barbara's and somebody from Northern State would come and sort of present on one topic. And then, throughout the year we were planning these units for the portfolio that we compiled.

While we were teaching, I sort of just did what we were supposed to do. But for me now, thinking about what a portfolio is, it's some of your best work that shows your thoughtfulness about things. All of us were like, "Okay, this is like the hardest year for us to put together a portfolio." Because we don't know what the end is supposed to be like.

What it did, though, it set up a frame of mind of reflecting, because there were these tons of questions, like: How would you change instruction? How would you modify things? I think that routine got us in that mode for us to put that together. It made for a very interesting process because we did have to videotape each of the units, and then look at it and examine what was going on and have our peer group take a look at what we were doing. So, I think there's a lot of practices that were things for reflective practice. I think it's just hard in the first year to do when teachers are just like: How do you keep a grade book? What's your behavior management system? I think there's just those moments where you're like these are the most pressing things right now. Forget the other stuff for a minute. Let's just stick to that.

Now at this point, I could totally see where they're going with it, 'cause that makes so much sense. But there is a definite difference, and I've heard, you know, having this discussion with City Area Writing Project. For new teachers, for first- and second-year teachers, there's just a definite difference of what their needs are. It's not that they're bad teachers; it's just that they're trying to get a handle on the all of this. You need the real basic stuff. Just the day-to-day. (Int. 2, p. 6-7)

Ron admits that he was drawn to the community model his teacher education program provided. All teaching candidates lived communally at a convent in the inner city. Community meals were provided, and the candidates were paid \$75 every two weeks. Besides providing teaching candidates with multiple opportunities to engage in discussions around their teaching experiences, living as members of an inner city community in austerity mirrored the life style of the children they served. This is the strength of this particular teacher education model. You learn the advantages and disadvantages of living in an inner city neighborhood. This type of teacher training model results in more empathic responses to the needs of marginalized children. Christine Sleeter (2001), claims this to be the most effective way to train White teacher candidates for inner city teaching. However, Ron admits he was attracted to this program because of its alignment with his religion and spiritual beliefs. These core values are integral to Ron's identity, and they are apparent in every shared aspect of his life.

Ron begins this part of his narrative by discussing the intensity of the compacted program. That is, perhaps, one of the reasons that living in community with your colleagues can

be beneficial. There are few outside distractions, and all are focused on their learning and teaching.

Ron talks about practicing reflection on teaching in a group, and about the common language and understandings that come out of this experience. He believes it made him more critical in his thinking and more thoughtful about decisions he makes. He told me that one of the best things about his teacher education program was that you had teachers to go to at the end of the day (Field notes, p. 1).

Ron feels he was taught to teach with more of an inquiry approach, becoming an observer in his own classroom. He's learned to step away and think of what's happening. Yet Ron voices a common complaint about teacher education programs, the "just give me what I need right now" syndrome.

After his initiation into teaching, he sees the significant components of his program that he uses and builds on. Ron also believes that the most important aspect he brings to the classroom is his experience. He includes his service, travel, family influences, and his attention to other's experiences. All of these, according to Ron, have shaped him as a person and a teacher more than his teacher education program (Int. 1, p. 6).

**Service and maturity.** I believe the time spent with Ron and his students was informative. I witnessed a teacher who assisted his students in seeing multiple perspectives, and in altering their attitudes as a result. He learned his teaching skills in a high-needs school, honed them in a private school, and will return to a high needs school to continue his growth. This time he will have more autonomy to teach in a student-centered manner in a public school. He hopes to demonstrate that this can be done in all public schools.

Ron's narration of formative experiences in his vastly storied life centers on the concept of service to others. Ron's early years of service seem driven by the subsequent positive feelings they elicit. He seems to relive these stories as he narrates them. Suddenly, there is a keen change in the chronicling and the chronicles. The service aspect loses the ensuing giddiness and matures into contemplation and perception. This is the mature Ron.

Teaching is a complex enterprise. It requires attention to so many tasks in so many domains. The complicated nature of being a human and a teacher simultaneously causes its own tensions. Throughout Ron's narrative and ways of being in relationship to his students and others, I took note of what Ron perceived as tensions.

### **Student Outcomes**

During my time in his classroom, Ron tells me of a service project a student in his class organized. He was sharing a story about a boy who developed a fundraiser to help Africans build their own wells. One of Ron's students from Holy Angels, Gracie, was very affected by the story. She wanted to help provide supplies for students at Ron's former school, St. Mary's, in a very impoverished community.

Gracie was an avid reader, always providing critiques of her latest reads to other students. Gracie organized a Read-a-Thon among the 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Gracie recruited 2 other 4<sup>th</sup> graders, developed parent letters, made pledge forms, and put out book recommendations. A core group in class was responsible for the management of the one month project. They raised \$1000 for St. Mary's School. They arranged a date to visit St. Mary's to meet each other and deliver the check. The students of St. Mary's had a gift for Holy Angels. They held a Thanksgiving service

with the Choir performing. The students from Holy Angels were awed. Ron believes that there are gifts in all communities.

Inspired and supported by a teacher who shares his life stories with his students, Ron's student becomes engaged in service. I believe that this took place in Ron's classroom because of his own service orientation. He carves space in the curriculum for a student to carry out service to others.

A strand of my study explores possible student outcomes related to having had this participating teacher over the past year. The student focus group in Case Two was exceptionally reflective and articulate. They provided me with information about the outcomes students feel they had experienced as a result of having had Ron Avit as a teacher.

Students were very aware of the importance Ron placed on writing. He talked about the importance of writing for communication over time and space, chronicling important events, and writing as an art form. They noticed the strategies Ron used to help them become more autonomous, such as posting information on large sheets of paper attached to the walls.

Ron hand-rendered charts of every element of the writing process, whether it was creative writing or informative writing. He kept them up as soon as he introduced them, and referred to them for different writing projects. I felt it added a level of self-autonomy for his students to refer to the chart that provided the requisite information rather than going directly to the teacher. However, classmates were always encouraged to help each other out as well.

I heard Ron explain to his students that they were only taking the math test for the teacher to collect data on what he needed to teach in a different or better way. This was reiterated in focus groups. By consciously lowering the stakes on the tests kids relax and perform better. They do not view themselves as deficient. Ron used this strategy effectively.

I did not receive conventional responses when I asked students about school. They spoke of Mr. Avit's ability to engage them, and the fact that he did not favor any students over another. Students appreciated the authentic math tasks Mr. Avit assigned. They claimed that their teacher believed how important their learning was to their future, especially their socio-economic success. I found that interesting.

Ron teaches metacognitive skills which help students understand how they store and retrieve data. It also enables them to draw on similar concepts or experiences known as schema. These students commented that by sharing their prior knowledge on a topic, they were enriching their own and their classmates' schema. Teaching cognitive strategies enables students to assess their own understanding, and provides them with a sense of agency.

I notice Ron integrating his units of inquiry. In math he teaches transactions: being in the red, or being in the black. Students are learning the transaction charts. Then he tells the students, "You'll be using these when you do your Journeys." Journeys was based on a social studies unit. So I solicited some student perception of that. I was surprised how the students not only noticed it, but remarked about how it differed from other classes in which they had been. In focus groups they expressed how this technique helped them make cross-disciplinary connections.

Ron's students sensed his genuine support and respect for them and understood each student's unique capacities. Students claimed that when teaching math he validated all the different strategies they used.

According to his students, Ron was exceptionally capable of enabling students to understand the perspectives of different people in a global society. He brought current events and multiple perspectives of people together.

Ron's students really believed he knew each of them well: their capacities, their interests, their special talents. Students spoke of how he had inspired them to try something new or difficult. Especially touching was the students' sense of Ron valuing their opinions.

### **Internal Consistency: Case Two**

Ron Avit's Early Formative Experience and Later Lived Experiences, and Reflection on those experiences impact his teaching practice. Ron has made these statements during interviews. Strong family values of service, and his numerous and varied service projects at home and abroad, shape him and influence his world view.

One particular narrated experience in which Ron participated at Sahoday School in India causes him to compare students there with American students. He is impressed by the global knowledge Sahoday students possess, and desires the same outcomes for American students. This aligns with observations of Ron engaging his students with first person writings from a variety of perspectives. One that stands out is a book they read about a child's existence in Iraq. It seems to be an eye-opener for his students, and the discussion around it is thoughtful and complex.

In Student Focus Groups, the students relate the extent to which their teacher opened their eyes to multiple perspectives. They discuss the book on Iraq as one of the many ways their teacher offered them new ways of seeing.

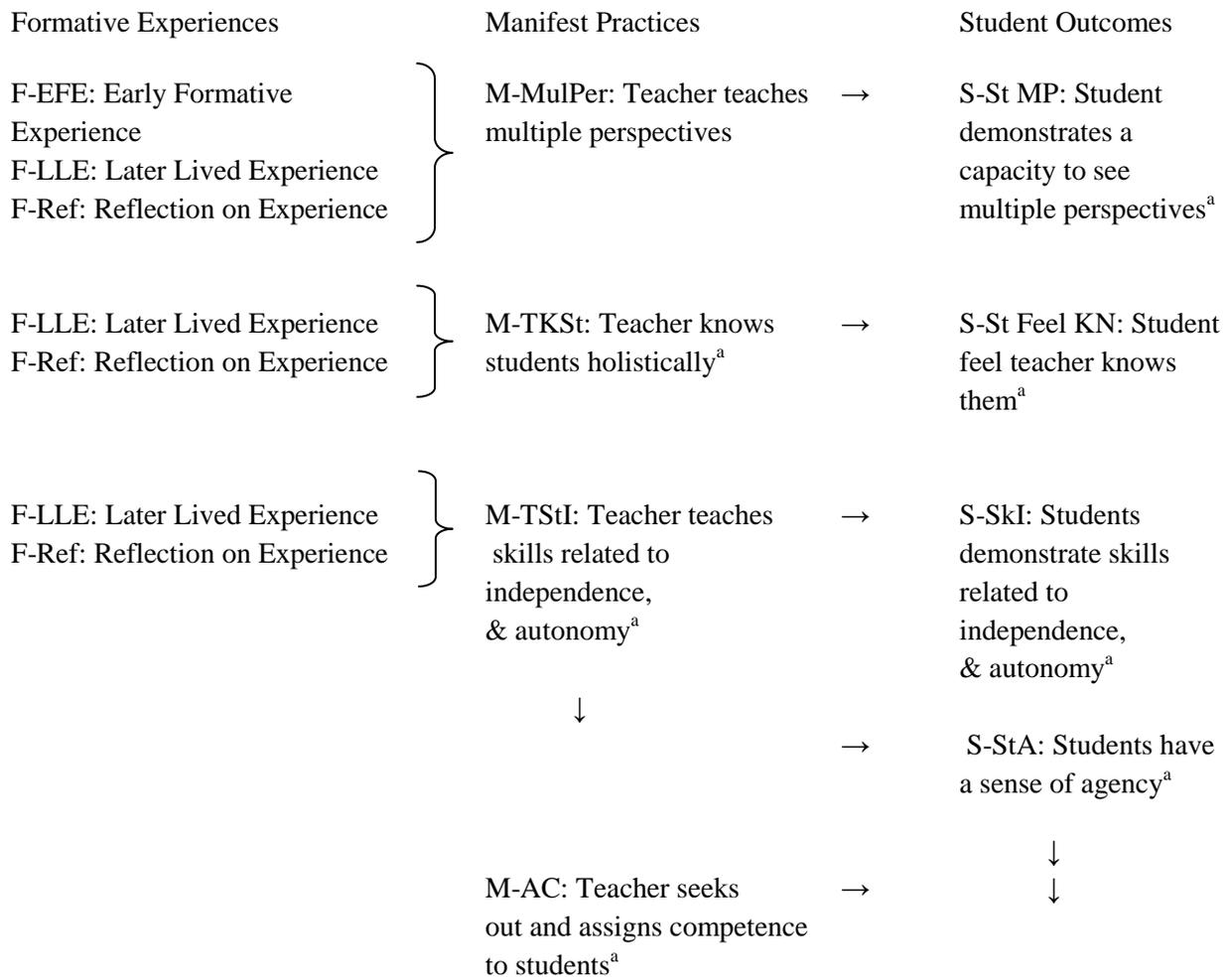
Ron's Early Formative Experience, particularly the values of service and charitable acts learned from his family, reappear in his narratives. Ron leaves a school of historically underserved populations of students to teach at Holy Angels. However, he continues a scholarship program at the first school, St. Mary's and involves his current students in acts of

service and kindness to that school. This relates to his powerful insights and desire for enabling his students to experience genuine empathy and passion as those of the students at Sahoday. He tells me of the Holy Angels class providing for the financial needs of St. Mary's, and how in an act of reciprocity the first school invites Ron's class over as guests at a concert of their Gospel Choir and a Thanksgiving dinner. So both schools have something to offer each other. This resonates with Ron's statement of seeing "wealth" in all communities. Additionally, this has a profound impact on Ron's current students as demonstrated in their Student Focus Group narratives.

The initiative above was started by one girl as a Read-a-Thon. She recruits others to help, and eventually the whole class is involved. This really speaks to the students' sense of agency in Ron's class.

Ron narrates in a Later Lived Experience and Former Career Experience a desire to know children in a more holistic way rather than only seeing them for a short period of time while they are in a Pediatric ward. This aligns with my many observations of Ron talking to his students about their personal worlds. This was demonstrated in the Student Focus Group at which every student present voiced their feeling about how well Mr. Avit knew them, their abilities, their interests and their families. One claimed that Ron was more like a friend than a teacher.

Finally, Ron constantly seeks out students engaged in acts of competence, and publically assigns competence to these students, announcing their expertise to the rest of the class. Here I make the connection between the teacher's action and the high incidence of positive sense of identity these students narrated in the Student Focus Group (see Figure 2).



<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

*Figure 2.* Case Two: Internal consistency: Demonstrating relation of experiences, practices and student outcomes.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Cross-case Analysis**

#### **Lived Experience**

Both participants cited their lived experience prior to teaching as a significant factor in their success teaching in high needs schools. These two teachers have backgrounds that are divergent and unique.

Further, both participants expressed that their lived experiences prior to teaching had prepared them for teaching in a high needs school more than their teacher education programs had. Each claimed to have learned some things from his teacher education program, but learned far more in life experiences prior to it that prepared him for teaching in high needs schools.

One participant, Case One, also credited his own schooling experiences to his success, claiming that he attended the same types of schools as the one in which he now teaches.

#### **Observed Practices**

One important component of my study was observing the teachers' practices to learn what it was about the practices that were successful with the given population in the classroom. I also noted the frequency of these practices related to the time I spent in the classroom (see Appendices). I considered any practice I observed four or more times to be significant, especially if it was expressed in the Student Focus Groups.

In Case One, the teacher, bi-racial, identified with his students (frequently stated by teacher). He explicitly taught his students about the social, political and economic forces that imposed placement. He instructed them of the role of schooling in maintaining a stratified

system. He critiqued the textbook and supplemented it with materials that demonstrated counter-narratives to the textbooks. He challenged the dominant educational discourse, and employed opportunities for students to act on their placement.

This teacher held high expectations for his students, and permitted few excuses. His teaching was culturally relevant, and he worked with his students on their cultural identities.

I identified “struggle” as the conceptual theme of his practice. He taught against the notion of the oppressed as passive victims, as he privileged the history of “struggle” and resistance. He reiterated that there were no easy ways out, that one had to struggle to make gains, and that the struggle should be collective and ongoing.

The notion of “struggle” is also relevant in John Kinzie’s personal life as a bi-racial (Caucasian-Mexican American) who identifies with his Mexican heritage, but simultaneously passes as White. The tension of embodying both the oppressor and the oppressed, and of being both insider and outsider remains unresolved for John (from interviews).

In Case Two, Ron Avit’s practice was student-centered. Ron taught skills and used strategies that enabled him to work one-on-one with a student while the others carried out their work. The students in his room were given multiple opportunities to be autonomous and develop a sense of self-agency. He taught students to see multiple perspectives and privileged each student’s perspective and abilities.

Ron also trained his students in understanding their own learning processes by consistently presenting them with tools for metacognition. A practice that I noted several times during my time in Ron’s room was his use of assigning competence to student or group of students. He would publicly point out a student’s expertise in a specific area and other students

would acknowledge the student for that skill. While building the student's self-esteem he was also pointing out a human resource in the class.

The threads of service and commitment run throughout Ron's case. Prior to this teaching position, he taught in a school with deep poverty. He continues to work with the first school by tutoring students and running a scholarship program to place these students in Catholic high schools. He engages his current class with his prior class through projects.

Concurrently, Ron exists in the tension of enduring apparent socioeconomic status in his classroom due to information withheld from the teachers. He seems to ignore it, while in fact, he is engaging his students with those from a lower economic status at his former school, St. Mary's.

### **Student Focus Groups**

Student Focus Groups from both schools related the importance their teachers placed on being able to do things for themselves, being more independent. Both groups cited that their teachers taught them to see multiple perspectives, and how to use metacognitive strategies.

During meeting with the Student Focus Group in Case One, students claimed that Mr. Kinzie talked a lot about struggle, and emphasized working hard. The students admitted that he was tough on them, but some countered that it was because he cared. Students also discussed how the teacher wanted them to do well in their lives as adults.

The students in this focus group told me about their experiences writing book reviews that were published on Internet. They were very excited about being "published" authors.

The students in the Student Focus Group in Case Two talked about all the things they were now able to do as a result of having been in Mr. Avit's class. Although they did not

specifically state outcomes of having a more positive sense of identity, talking about their new skills and capabilities indicated a more positive sense of identity to me.

The students in Focus Group Two also recounted incidents to demonstrate how well Mr. Avit knew each student's unique capabilities, and encouraged his students in those areas. They also felt Mr. Avit knew them as individuals.

From this study I learned that both participants attributed their success in teaching in high needs schools to their lived experiences prior to enrolling in a teacher education program. Further, both participants expressed that their lived experience prior to teaching had prepared them for teaching in a high needs school more than their teacher education experiences had. Each claimed to have learned something from their teacher education program, but learned more from life experiences.

One participant in Case One credited his own experiences as a student to his success claiming that the schools he had attended were similar to the schools in which he now taught. This participant is bi-racial and taught the social, political and economic forces that prevail in the construction of a stratified and hierarchical social system. He taught his students about the placement imposed upon them or assigned to them by this social system, and taught about the school's role in maintaining this system.

In Case Two I observed the tension of the participant teaching in a school that mirrors the stratified social system. The notion of socioeconomic status is always in play in his classroom, but because of the school's policy of withholding this information from teachers, he does what he can. He engages his current students with his former students in an effort to enable his current students to witness public schooling for marginalized students. In what appears to be a transformational moment for his current students, his former students proffer their own gifts:

Gospel music and a Thanksgiving meal. This reiterates Ron's epiphany from Sahoday. All communities have their own type of wealth.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion and Implications

#### Conclusion

**Overview.** This research presents a view of teaching that moves beyond definitions of good teaching as a set of skills that can be easily mastered. It suggests that teaching should consider the social positions of teachers and their students in relation to what students learn. In this sense teaching cannot be tied to mere content goals like reading, writing, and mathematics; learning is always directly connected with opportunities to understand one's placement in society and history. Thus, learning enables the learner to make changes in society that align with the future identity he desires, not the identity dictated by schools. Teaching is always about social justice.

The use of critical theory as a lens enables one to problematize the normative rather than problem-solve. Critical theory implemented as a research tool facilitates looking beyond that which has been rendered to appear typical, common, or normal. In this way it provides alternative views of a perceived problem or phenomenon, enabling new modes by which to frame the problem. My use of critical theory as a lens and critical consciousness as a phenomenon to be explored enabled me to frame problems in the education system while investigating potential use of critical consciousness in teachers' practices.

For example, through the use of both critical theory and critical consciousness to frame the preparation of teachers, we may begin to reveal that regardless of the training individuals receive in teacher education programs, an individual's own lived experience will inform what he sees as the goals for education and for marginalized students, in particular.

This research also employs a framework of social placement that has been deconstructed in order to examine its historical construction. Focusing on social placement as manufactured rather than inherent, holds implications for a society where it is still in play. That is, when teachers are able to deconstruct how they have been placed in society (e.g., with unearned privilege, through subjugation, as abnormal) and can also reflect on how that position may allow them to better support their students, they may be more likely to challenge the prevailing system that tends to view marginalized students through deficit and deviant lenses. Although it is meant to be transparent, critical consciousness makes social placement and its consequences visible.

By conducting this research in the classrooms of teachers committed to teaching marginalized, or socially placed, students, I was able to view and inquire into the everyday practice of these teachers. I witnessed the tensions that come with the territory, while teachers and students revealed fragments of their experiences. The implications for teaching, teacher education and research follow.

**Findings.** With respect to teaching, this study considers both the claims these teachers make regarding their own teaching practices, as well as what they viewed as the most significant aspects. Both teachers emphasized the substantial role of their lived experience as the most crucial element in enabling their teaching of marginalized students. Although each teacher's particular lived experience was unique, both were complex and poignant with tensions arising in relation to contradictions each faced.

This research also highlights both participants' ability to reflect on their lived experience and engage in a form of praxis, which allows for self-critique, theorizing and making meaning of their experience in relation to their classroom practices. This process was not always seamless,

as evident in the case studies. In fact, it was inundated with tensions that varied by participant and context.

Participant One contended with a dysfunctional school bureaucracy. In addition, he held high standards for his students, and was disparaged when they did not make their best effort. However, the most difficult struggle for John was his bi-cultural status, Caucasian and Mexican-American. His White features gave him access to privilege, while making him vulnerable to slurs made about Mexicans. He identified more with his Mexican culture, but was often perceived as an outsider in the Mexican community. He used his own cultural status as an example that marginalized students could achieve success. He knew, however, that his Whiteness paved his way. This tension was one with which John constantly lived.

As a result of embodying the perceived outsider, John was very sensitive to the needs of his students' feelings of belonging. He worked at making his group of students, many of whom were bussed from outside the neighborhood, feel like a community. His class had their own insider jokes, worked in cooperative learning groups, and were encouraged to support each other as they struggled collectively at math, reading or social studies. John talked to his students often about their commitment to perseverance and struggle, and about giving back to the community when one succeeds.

Participant Two, Ron, grappled with his own values and beliefs. His sense of service to others aligned with his spiritual disposition nurtured by his family and faith. His service was performed in sites of poverty around the country and world. An initial tension formed around his altruism, which vacillated between pure intentions and self-serving acts. A tension that loomed large during my time in his classroom was the visible stratification of the student population in his school setting. While the school aligned with his spiritual beliefs, the affluent setting

conflicted with his desire to serve marginalized students. The school maintained a diverse population by providing one third of the students who could not afford tuition with scholarships. However, the scholarship students were never revealed to faculty or staff. Economic privilege manifested itself in other ways: clothing, possessions, and experiences.

While working in his current teaching position, Ron utilized tools and strategies that helped all students, but particularly marginalized students, in developing skill sets related to self-agency, and a positive self identity. His intentional implementation of assigning expertise or competence to individual students, especially marginalized students, gave them an authentic sense of pride and achievement. It also provided a sense of capability that extended into other areas of the curriculum.

Simultaneously, Ron found ways to serve in his former school, which served marginalized students. He tutored there on week-ends and after school. He started a foundation that financially supported his former students to attend Catholic high schools. He took them on trips to college campuses to encourage them to go beyond high school. Eventually, John decided to open a public charter school in a marginalized neighborhood. He raised funds so that students at the charter school will have resources similar to the resources in his current school.

A significant finding of my case studies was the revelation that both teachers felt that their lived experience trumped their teacher education in terms of enabling their success with marginalized students. This is not altogether surprising given that data from studies of teacher education programs detected a similar finding. That is, upon graduating from a teacher education program, pre-service teachers' beliefs, and knowledge about teaching practice and diverse learners were largely a function of their beliefs and knowledge they already had upon entering a

teacher education program. The only factor that seemed to influence pre-service teachers was a program's conceptual orientation (TELT, 1993).

**Discussion.** In general, teachers are benevolent. Most sincerely come to the profession because they either love their subject area or they love children. They mean no harm when they teach from the mandated revisionist history book. Many feel comfortable teaching the patriotic ideals with which they have been indoctrinated. Teachers believe in the basic good will of our education system to provide them with the tools they need to teach. Many teachers truly believe that assimilating all children into the mainstream culture is good for them. As a teaching friend once said, "We see no difference in skin color. We teach all children equally."

However, in enacting these pedagogical "neutralities," we fail to see that we are, indeed, acting politically. Without interrogating the curriculum, the textbooks, the process of assimilation akin to deculturation, we are teaching to maintain a stratified society, a society with considerable power and little incentive to improve conditions for those who have been marginalized.

As teachers, we need to organize in more ways than unionization. We have to find political allies and advocates to buoy us while we fight the good fight, to change our schools into resilient new spaces that honor all children and their rich cultural inheritances. We need to continue to learn to become critically conscious from each other, because if anyone can make a difference, it is we, the teacher educators. We need to provide solace for colleagues in these times of degradation and humiliation from those who would depose us.

However, one of the ways teacher education has obstructed a true school reform is by ignoring the significance of producing teachers with an understanding of their social placement. We like to believe that we develop the capacity for reflective practice in our pre-service teachers,

but the notion of actually disrupting the dominant discourse to prepare teaching candidates who are critically conscious does not appear to be a disposition valued in most teacher education programs. Additionally, it is rocky terrain. If critical consciousness training becomes an add-on, similar to multiculturalism, it is unlikely to be taught in an experiential and meaningful way. It takes tactful, trusting and savvy instructors who can create a safe environment in which students are compelled to explore the construction of whiteness and racialization, and how in unison with economics, status and power, these constructions have become normalized. Asking students to consider issues that are sensitive and potentially contentious to their beliefs, culture and identity, and how these inform students' world views is a slippery endeavor. Getting pre-service teachers to understand how their views and values impact their teaching practices and ultimately serve to either maintain or reform society is one tall, but necessary, order. I have yet to see a teacher education program that recognizes the importance of requiring critical race theory as a component of its core teacher education curriculum.

**Limitations.** As a case study, the aforementioned findings cannot be considered generalizable. That was not my intention. Instead I have focused on the phenomenon of these unique teachers who are in the midst of trying to embody their own definitions of critical consciousness with marginalized students. Their case studies are rife with tensions inherent in being a committed teacher of marginalized students in a system that is socially dysconscious, that is, intentionally disregarding of the needs of marginalized people. My research leaves me with more questions than answers.

## **Implications**

After over 30 years in the field of education, I find myself asking the rhetorical question that researcher and former psychiatric professor, Gerald Coles (2012) posted in a recent blog: *Why Bother Educating the Poor?* This question provokes interrogation of the systems in place that prevent educators, especially those who genuinely understand and care about changing conditions for marginalized kids, from enacting a critical pedagogy built on critical consciousness.

**Guiding questions for teachers.** Do we explicitly teach our students about the social, political and economic forces that impose placement? Do we instruct them of the role of schooling in maintaining a stratified system? Do we critique textbooks and supplement them with materials that demonstrate counter-narratives to the textbooks? Do we challenge the dominant educational discourse, and employ opportunities for our students to explore and to act on their placement or privilege?

These questions provide guidelines for reviewing our own practices in relation to our students. They are provocative and need to be explored to create an age-appropriate curriculum and caring environment by teachers in partnerships with students' families and community. In reviewing these, I am reminded of the joyful, emancipatory practice of early childhood teacher, writer, and activist, Mary Cowhey (2006, p. 82). Mary enables her young students to have meaningful dialogue around everyday classroom incidents such as a small invasion of black ants, and connect these with concepts such as Buddhism. She is my role model.

I remember my own teaching experiences in elementary schools. Though I am still learning to grow my practice in critical pedagogy, I found ways to move in that direction. I had an open door policy with parents and encouraged them to visit and share their experiences with

our class. One year a Mexican-American mother, Anna, came to talk to me. She was trying to teach her daughter, Nicki to speak Spanish. Nicki, a bright student in my second grade class was dismissive of her mother's culture and language. So, together Anna and I hatched a plan for her to teach Spanish to the entire class two mornings a week. As the class began to learn Spanish, Nicki became interested in the language, and wanted to excel at it. She began to beg her mother to teach her Spanish at home so that she could be ahead of the class. Throughout that school year Anna taught my students Spanish language, Mexican culture, and assisted students in the classroom. We became steadfast friends. That summer I traveled with Nicki, Anna and her younger sister, Terri to Anna's former home in a small town in Mexico, and witnessed the girls' use of a combination of Spanish, English and gesturing to play with their cousin, Xochi. Today both Nicki and Terri are fluent in Spanish. I think back to that time, and how all of my students and I benefitted from learning a second language and culture and becoming acquainted with Anna.

I refer to this story because I believe that I teach in community with my students' parents and guardians. In doing so I receive the benefits of learning about my student from multiple perspectives which enables me to better accommodate his or her needs. Knowing the students' families assists me in understanding their cultural identities as well as establishing trusting relationships.

When I do present controversial issues to my students, I communicate with their families beforehand, and answer any questions they may have. In this way these topics are often discussed again at home, and I benefit from the parent feedback I elicit. Certainly, critically conscious teachers have innumerable strategies they utilize to develop these pressing issues into appropriate learning experiences for their students.

I believe that the issues framed here as guiding questions are taught in broader contexts such as civil rights or holidays of American heroes. However, these concepts should be embedded in our teaching practices including setting up a more communal, safe and democratic classroom space. We can seek out resources, such as books or movies that present an entry into the exploration of these issues. I like to bring current events into my classroom. Often the children are aware of them from mainstream media coverage, or family conversations. I present alternative ways to think about these events. Teachers can maintain a heightened awareness of teaching moments that provide opportunities to engage and explore these issues.

The catastrophic event of watching our playground being bulldozed on the first day of school, resulted in a year-long study of the building being constructed on the site, and the opportunity to design the playground of our dreams. We studied form, function, structural integrity, and architecture.

There came a point in my students' discussions regarding the assurance that our new playground would be handicap-accessible. The discussion was heated, as our school was a fully inclusive one, meaning that we had students in wheelchairs. My second-graders were designing the playground with a set of criteria they gathered through surveys in all classrooms. They were struggling with material and design that would insure the equipment was safe and stable, while considering that it would need to withstand the elements. Inserting the handi-capable criterion into the design caused dissonance for some class members. Those in favor of the new challenge immediately asked to visit Ms. Ruth's room, where they asked Jacob and his teacher if they could borrow him for a few minutes. Jacob rolled alongside my students back to our room, where a group of designers and engineers were waiting with measuring tapes and scales. At last it was determined that the playground equipment would be accessible for wheelchairs.

I confess that I was not a part of the discussion or decision. I was busy videotaping this phenomenon to share with teaching colleagues. Many people do not believe that 7-year-olds have the capacity to handle tough problems or issues. My experiences have proved the opposite. Not only do they have the capacity to engage in weighty discussions, they also have a keen sense of fairness and a developing moral compass.

**Guiding questions for teacher educators.** Do we explicitly teach our preservice teachers about the social, political and economic forces that impose placement? Do we instruct them of the role of schooling in maintaining a stratified system? Do we critique textbooks and supplement them with materials that demonstrate counter-narratives to the textbooks? Do we challenge the dominant educational discourse, and employ opportunities for our preservice teachers to explore and to act on their placement or privilege?

These questions should guide our professional practices as teacher educators. They push us to go beyond multiculturalism and issues of stereotyping. They strike at our own and our students' identities and cause us dissonance. They call upon our courage and commitment to a meaningful reform of education at all levels. They challenge our administrations. We cannot go on preparing teachers for a system that distorts the concept of education for a democratic society, while it privatizes it for profit.

As a teacher educator I collaborate with a creative, insightful team. Our assignments are unconventional, and engage our students in crossing invisible borders by participating in activities that they would normally avoid. These include attending Muslim services, participating in LGBT activities, and partaking in African American spoken word celebrations. They reflect on their preconceived notions beforehand, document their experiences, and reflect on what they have learned as a result.

I select provocative reading such as *Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers* by Joyce E. King (1991) and *Unpacking White Privilege* by Peggy McIntosh (1990). I teach Critical Race Theory to my students through reading and discussion of Derrick Bell's (2002) *Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma*, Gloria Ladson- Billings' (1995) *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, and Hayman and Levit's (2002) *Un-natural Things: Construction of Race, Gender and Disability*.

We engage in Media Studies, and compare differing accounts of a specific current event in the media. We look for commercial advertising in schools aimed at young students as consumers. We watch movies such as the *Merchants of Cool*, an expose on how trends are appropriated by merchandisers, manufactured and sold in mass.

I always invite speakers in to my classroom. This past semester, a representative from the Eastern Illinois Foodbank talked to my classroom about the problem of hidden hunger. She told my students that it is often perceptive teachers who discover hunger and malnutrition in their students. She provided them with a checklist of signs of hidden hunger, and offered local resources. I turned this into an optional class project. I encouraged my students to get the free and reduced lunch information from their school, and to interview both their principals and cooperating teachers about student hunger. We shared results. The resulting information was startling. Reports showed discrepancies between what the principal thought about hidden hunger in his school and what the teachers observed. Further interviews with the meal servers confirmed that kids were coming back for second helpings which they hid in their pockets. Students going home on Fridays with backpacks of food provided by the Foodbank were being accosted by other students right outside the school. Children were stealing food from other children. My students were appalled.

We expose the myths in historical texts, collate collections of social justice sites, and interrogate our social placement. Several comments on my evaluations claimed that this was the only class my students had taken that specifically talked about race and racism.

Do we provide enough support to the marginalized students who do gain access to our education programs? Do we teach them how to succeed in college? Do we seek their insights into education? Do we enable them to share their cultural and educational experiences in our education programs? Do we demonstrate that we value their cultural experiences?

As I see cuts in programs that provide support for marginalized students who finally gain access to a college education I have to wonder; why bother? Even the brightest students coming from high schools teaching marginalized children need extra support to exist, let alone thrive, in this island of whiteness. Many of them do not have their own computers or printers, something we take for granted. They live in the poorest dorms with the least security. They leave loved ones back home who are still dealing with the ills that face many marginalized individuals. Universities can be shameful places. We need to do much better for our most vulnerable students.

**Guiding questions for teacher educators.** What can we as teacher educators do to prepare pre-service teachers who are committed to teaching marginalized students? In what ways are we helping them to reflect on their nascent practices? How can we help teacher candidates live with the tensions of a dichotomous education system without losing heart?

As a result of seeing and hearing the tensions of the experienced teachers in my study, I believe we need to address the realities of what it means to teach marginalized students in a dysfunctional system in our teacher education programs. We need to teach pre-service teachers how to find allies, advocates and support systems for their new vocations. We need more pre-

teaching experiences in schools that are like the ones in which our students will be teaching and more modeling of critically conscious teaching.

It is not difficult to find schools that serve marginalized students. The problem lies in maintaining good relationships with those schools. In some areas those relationships have been eroding as the universities place more limitation on the vouchers the cooperating teachers receive in exchange for taking student teachers for a semester. In exchange for providing placements for our students, universities should graciously withdraw limitations placed on university vouchers.

Additionally, placement directors need to be more sensitive to the placements students request. This is not always the case. In the past I have heard a placement director say that one can learn from good or bad teachers. This is untrue. Critically conscious teachers have extraordinary skills that cannot be learned from student-teaching across the hall. Students planning on teaching in a marginalized community are not going to learn the requisite skill set by teaching in an all white suburb of middle class children. Teacher educators, supervisors and placement personnel need to be more attuned to student-teachers' needs, and place them accordingly.

**Concerns for teacher educators.** Is there a way to compensate young adults with something akin to lived experience? What might that be? How can we tap the lived experience our students already possess?

I believe that we should start exploring partnerships with communities of marginalized people near our universities. Our teacher education programs should be deeply embedded in these communities to learn and to provide service. Our students should begin interacting in these communities as part of our liberal arts curriculum, before they enroll in teacher education.

Teacher educators need to facilitate relationships in the community. We should be asking the community members what we can do for them. In Case Two, Ron enters a Native American community and begins picking up garbage while children watch. A mother comes out and tells him that is not why she needs them in the community. Her people know how to pick up their own garbage. Ron is perceived as reflecting a negative impact on the native children, by showing them how to pick up garbage. What the Sioux people really need are marketing skills, and that is the reason they asked for university volunteers.

Teacher educators or liaisons must ask the marginalized communities how we can serve them. Next we organize programs in collaboration with the community residents, and maintain or change those programs to better serve the community. We do this gratefully because these people are providing new experiences for our students. As such, we should view them as extensions of our universities, places for authentic learning experiences.

Teacher educators should view all students as having life experiences that they can potentially draw on and that can be vicariously shared to expand our collective experience. We need to provide safe environments in which our students can talk about their lives and cultural identities. We need to engender those conversations by beginning with our own narratives. Every semester I learn something about my students that enables me to see them with fresh eyes: one student's family moved from the U.S. to work on a Costa Rican finca, another student plays on the underwater hockey team, yet another has three sisters adopted from China. Thus their status changes in my mind as I have more than just a name by which to know them.

**Additional considerations for teacher educators.** Should teacher education programs shift their focus to preparing teachers for the children who have been historically marginalized? If we do, how can we insure that these individuals have the dispositions for teaching in schools

with marginalized populations? Is it possible to teach dispositions? Can teacher education programs assist and support pre-service teachers in developing dispositions to serve in schools of marginalized students?

As we face a crisis in education geared to eliminate public education we need to move quickly. The schools that serve marginalized students are the most at risk for elimination. A shift in teacher education programs focusing on the traditionally underserved students and their schools could provide the impetus to make a statement through our unified action.

There are existing models of education for marginalized students from which we can learn about producing teachers that have the dispositions to teach successfully in these schools. One model where specific dispositions for teachers of hegemonized populations are delineated and taught is Alverno in Milwaukee, WI. Their work in that area has earned them a well-deserved reputation.

**Guiding questions for professional development.** In what ways are professional development programs assisting teachers currently practicing in schools of marginalized students? What do we perceive as their professional needs? Do we ask them what they consider to be their professional needs?

We need to work collaboratively with teachers of marginalized students to provide them a say in their professional development programs. Teacher development programs should elicit insight from these teachers and engage in meaningful dialogue about what they really need to go on teaching.

**Implications for future research.** Given the opportunity to continue my research in this area, I would approach the initial recruiting process differently. I would seek out organizations such as Teachers for Social Justice and others in the Midwest, and participate more in their

initiatives. This in and of itself would be informative. In addition, I would recruit potential candidates from within these organizations and form more collaborative relationships before entering the classroom. I would encourage the participants to have more say in setting the research agenda, so that my research served their needs as well. Longer, more consistent periods of time in each classroom would, I believe, provide me with a stronger sense of teachers' practices, and enable more dialogue between the participants and myself. I would encourage my participants to become more involved in the writing process involved in the study, perhaps in the form of co-authors.

Another interesting way to go about this project would be to recruit a group of teachers aligned with a social justice group to engage in a self- study project focused on critical theory and the phenomenon of critical consciousness over a year in their own classrooms. It could become an element embedded in their meetings allowing for a broader dialogue. Members could facilitate meetings and base agendas on elements of the self-study that they want to discuss. This sharing of experiences in a space in which they are already comfortable could enable deeper pursuit of the tensions inherent in teaching marginalized students and serve as a support system. This project framed as a professional development activity would provide individuals with the professional development hours they need to maintain their certification. Oakes, Franke, Quartz and Roger (2002, p. 228) offer other ways to frame research for high-quality urban teaching.

*Finally, some questions for all of us.* Can we engage the ambiguity, and live for a while with the tensions? Can we permit ourselves to practice and live in a way that makes space for that which is a little less resolved? For perhaps it is the unresolved space, fecund and generative, that holds the most possibility for transformation.

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## Appendix A

### Descriptors of Potential Candidates

Figure 3.1

- outstanding teachers from urban education programs.
- individuals with exceptional insight enabling them to critique the social and education system while they teach  
(For example, they may critique the western "canon" while they and their students seek alternative accounts of history or literature, alternative voices.)
- teachers with a social justice stance
- teachers whose students demonstrate positive outcomes (beyond those measured by standardized testing)
- teachers with at least two years of classroom experience so that they are no longer learning how to implement teaching methods, but they are now at least beginning to reflect on their practice and intentionally shaping it.

## **Appendix B**

### **Qualifying Interview**

When did you first know that you wanted to teach?

What types of formal and informal experiences did you have prior to teaching?

What do you think makes a good teacher?

What do you think makes a good teacher for urban kids?

## **Appendix C**

### **Initial Interview Questions/Prompts**

Tell me about yourself. Start at any point in your life.

What made you decide to teach?

Can you define and perhaps give a name to the type of teaching that you believe you practice?

What will I see happening in your classroom that verifies this type of teaching?

Have you ever heard of critical consciousness?

Do you use any methods or practices that might be considered critically conscious?

## **Appendix D**

### **Prompts Used in Subsequent Interviews**

Why did you select your Teacher Education Program?

Did your Teacher Education equip you with the skills you needed to teach here?

What components of the program were most useful to you?

What components of the program were least useful for your practice?

## Appendix E

### Analytic Codes Derived from the Literature/Study

Table E1

*Analytic Codes Derived From the Literature/Study*

Formative experiences	Manifest practices	Student outcomes
F-EFE: Early Formative Experience	M-TAPI: Teacher aware of own social placement	S-AccSocCap: Students can access social capital
F-Rac: Racialization as Formative	M-TAStPI: Teacher aware of students' placement	S-StAPI Students are aware of social placement
F-Sch: Schooling as Formative	M-TASch: Teacher aware of role of schooling in placement	S-ActPI: St acts on placement
F-CarExp: Former Career Experience	M-TASPE Sch: Teacher aware of social, political and economic influence on schooling	S-StThPI: Students think pluralistically
F-LLE: Later Lived Experience	M-CrCur: Teacher critiques curriculum, textbooks and other mandated educational materials	S-STAC-N: Students are aware of counter narratives
F-Mat: Maturation as Formative	M-MulPer: Teacher teaches multiple perspectives	S-St ADomDis: Students are aware of dominant discourse
F-Ref: Reflection on Formation	M-EDw/St: Teacher engages with students re: placement issues	S-StA: Students have a sense of agency
F-TE: Teacher Education as Formative	M-ActP: Teacher employs opportunities to act on placement	S-St pos id: Students have positive sense of identity
	M-PrC-Nar: Teacher privileges counter-narratives	S-StR: Student is resilient
	M-CDED: Teacher challenges dominant educational discourse	S-ST MP: Student demonstrates a capacity to see multiple perspectives <sup>a</sup>
	M-DS: Teacher instructs specifically on how to “do school” <sup>a</sup>	S-ES: Students engage in struggle <sup>a</sup>

(continued)

Table E1 (continued)

Formative experiences	Manifest practices	Student outcomes
	M-HE: Teacher holds high expectations for students <sup>a</sup>	S-SkI: Students demonstrate skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>
	M-Str: Teacher engages students in collaborative struggle <sup>a</sup>	S-StATHE: Students are aware of teacher's high expectations <sup>a</sup>
	M-TKSt: Teacher knows students holistically <sup>a</sup>	S-StFTKnST: Student feels that teacher knows him <sup>a</sup>
	M-TStI: Teacher teaches skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	S-Str: Students are aware of their need to struggle <sup>a</sup>
	M-CR: Teacher teaches in a culturally relevant manner <sup>a</sup>	
	M-IW: Teacher engages in student identity work <sup>a</sup>	
	M-AC: Teacher seeks out and assigns competence to students <sup>a</sup>	

<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

## Appendix F

### Frequency of Incidents: Case One

Table F1

*Frequency of Incidents: Case One*

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
F-EFE: Early formative experience	8	M-TAPI: Teacher aware of own social placement	10	S-AccSocCap: Students can access social capital	3
F-Rac: Racialization as Formative	10	M-TASPI: Teacher aware of students' placement	10	S-StAPI: Students are aware of social placement	5
F-Sch: Schooling as formative	4	M-TASch: Teacher aware of role of schooling in placement	8	S-ActPI: St acts on placement	3
F-CarExp: Former career experience	2	M-TASPE Sch: Teacher aware of social, political and economic influence on schooling	15	S-StThPI: Students think pluralistically	3
F-LLE: Later lived experience	8	M-CrCur: Teacher critiques curriculum, textbooks and other mandated educational materials	5	S-STAC-N: Students are aware of counter narratives	3
F-Mat: Maturation as formative	0	M-MulPer: Teacher teaches multiple perspectives	11	S-St ADomDis: Students are aware of dominant discourse	3
F-Ref: Reflection on formation	6	M-Edw/St: Teacher engages with students re: placement issues	9	S-StA: Students have a sense of agency	2

(continued)

Table F1 (continued)

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
F-TE: Teacher education as formative	1	M-ActP: Teacher employs opportunities to act on placement	14	S-St pos id: Students have positive sense of identity	3
		M-PrC-Nar: Teacher privileges counter-narratives	8	S-StR: Student is resilient	2
		M-CDED: Teacher challenges dominant educational discourse	9	S-ST MP: Student demonstrates a capacity to see multiple perspectives <sup>a</sup>	4
		M-DS: Teacher instructs specifically on how to “do school” <sup>a</sup>	3	S-ES: Students engage in struggle <sup>a</sup>	3
		M-HE: Teacher holds high expectations for students <sup>a</sup>	16	S-SkI: Students demonstrate skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	10
		M-Str: Teacher engages students in collaborative struggle <sup>a</sup>	10	S-StATHE: Students are aware of teacher’s high expectations <sup>a</sup>	4
		M-TKSt: Teacher knows students holistically <sup>a</sup>	7	S-StFTKnST: Student feels that teacher knows him <sup>a</sup>	4
		M-TstI: Teacher teaches skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	12	S-Str: Students are aware of their need to struggle <sup>a</sup>	5
		M-CR: Teacher teaches in a culturally relevant manner <sup>a</sup>	8		

(continued)

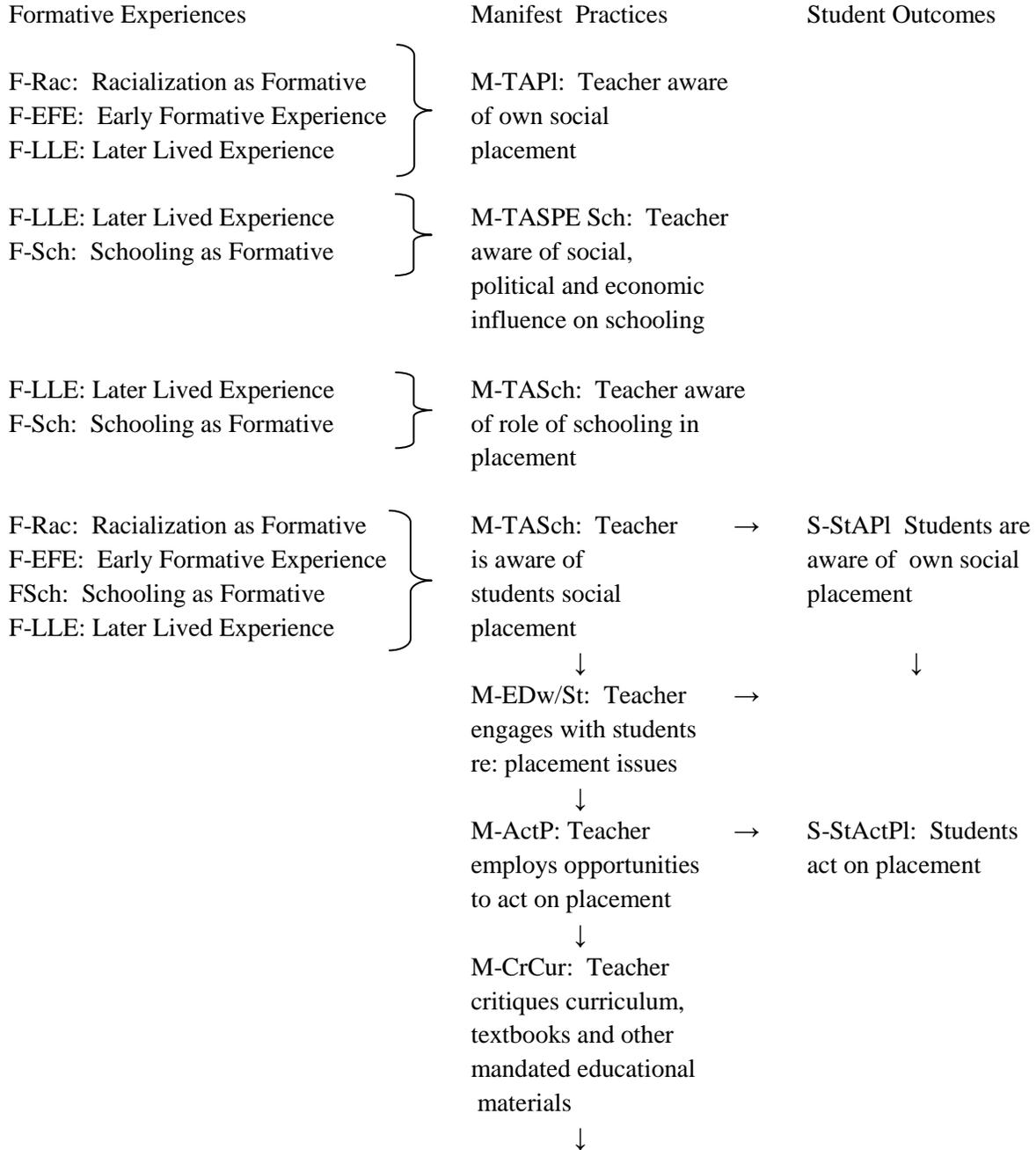
Table F1 (continued)

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
		M-IW: Teacher engages in student identity work <sup>a</sup>	10		
		M-AC: Teacher seeks out and assigns competence to students <sup>a</sup>	3		

<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

## Appendix G

### Internal Consistency: Demonstrating Relation of Experiences, Practices and Student Outcomes: Case One



(continued)



<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

## Appendix H

### Frequency of Incidents: Case Two

Table H1

*Frequency of Incidents: Case Two*

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
F-EFE: Early formative experience	7	M-TAPI: Teacher aware of own social placement	0	S-AccSocCap: Students can access social capital	4
F-Rac: Racialization as formative	0	M-TASStPI: Teacher aware of students' placement	0	S-StAPI: Students are aware of social placement	0
F-Sch: Schooling as formative	0	M-TASch: Teacher aware of role of schooling in placement	0	S-ActPI: St acts on placement	0
F-CarExp: Former career experience	1	M-TASPE Sch: Teacher aware of social, political and economic influence on schooling	0	S-StThPI: Students think pluralistically	4
F-LLE: Later lived experience	8	M-CrCur: Teacher critiques curriculum, textbooks and other mandated educational materials	1	S-STAC-N: Students are aware of counter narratives	0
F-Mat: Maturation as formative	1	M-MulPer: Teacher teaches multiple perspectives	6	S-St ADomDis: Students are aware of dominant discourse	0
F-Ref: Reflection on formation	5	M-Edw/St: Teacher engages with students re: placement issues	0	S-StA: Students have a sense of agency	10

(continued)

Table H1 (continued)

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
F-TE: Teacher education as formative	3	M-ActP: Teacher employs opportunities to act on placement	0	S-St pos id: Students have positive sense of identity	10
		M-PrC-Nar: Teacher privileges counter-narratives	0	S-StR: Student is resilient	5
		M-CDED: Teacher challenges dominant educational discourse	0	S-ST MP: Student demonstrates a capacity to see multiple perspectives <sup>a</sup>	10
		M-DS: Teacher instructs specifically on how to “do school” <sup>a</sup>	0	S-ES: Students engage in struggle <sup>a</sup>	10
		M-HE: Teacher holds high expectations for students <sup>a</sup>	3	S-SkI: Students demonstrate skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	10
		M-Str: Teacher engages students in collaborative struggle <sup>a</sup>	0	S-StATHE: Students are aware of teacher’s high expectations <sup>a</sup>	2
		M-TKSt: Teacher knows students holistically	10	S-StFTKnST: Student feels that teacher knows him	10
		M-TstI: Teacher teaches skills related to independence, autonomy <sup>a</sup>	10	S-Str: Students are aware of their need to struggle <sup>a</sup>	0
		M-CR: Teacher teaches in a culturally relevant manner <sup>a</sup>	0		

(continued)

Table H1 (continued)

Formative experiences		Manifest practices		Student outcomes	
Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency	Incident	Frequency
		M-IW: Teacher engages in student identity work <sup>a</sup>	3		
		M-AC: Teacher seeks out and assigns competence to students <sup>a</sup>	15		

<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.

## Appendix I

### Internal Consistency: Demonstrating Relation of Experiences, Practices and Student Outcomes: Case Two

Formative Experiences	Manifest Practices	Student Outcomes
F-EFE: Early Formative Experience F-LLE: Later Lived Experience F-Ref: Reflection on Experience	M-MulPer: Teacher teaches multiple perspectives	S-St MP: Student demonstrates a capacity to see multiple perspectives <sup>a</sup>
F-LLE: Later Lived Experience F-Ref: Reflection on Experience	M-TKSt: Teacher knows students holistically <sup>a</sup>	S-St Feel KN: Student feel teacher knows them <sup>a</sup>
F-LLE: Later Lived Experience F-Ref: Reflection on Experience	M-TStI: Teacher teaches skills related to independence, & autonomy <sup>a</sup>	S-SKI: Students demonstrate skills related to independence, & autonomy <sup>a</sup>
	↓	S-StA: Students have a sense of agency
	M-AC: Teacher seeks out and assigns competence to students <sup>a</sup>	↓ ↓

<sup>a</sup>Codes that emerged during the study.