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Constructing critical autoethnographic self-studies with white educators

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Autoethnography was used as a tool for white in-service elementary teachers to examine their racial identity from a Critical White Studies (CWS) perspective. Two white in-service teachers participated in two yearlong university courses focused on teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. Each teacher collected their own data at their school site and used autoethnographic methods to critically analyze their own teaching experiences and personal reflections. Results from the study illustrate the ways in which autoethnographic study can be used as an instrument for white teachers to frame their own critique of their white racial identity, as it relates to their classroom instruction.

Keywords: whiteness; autoethnography; teachers; race; self-study; ethnography

Once when I looked at myself there was nothing. I could not see any size, shape, any color. I could tell that I was still there because I was frightened ... I pressed myself against the stone like a being who wants to hide ... night after night I spent pressed against the smooth stone. One morning when I woke I saw my shape on it. It stayed there even when I moved away ... I could see my color there on the wall. (Merwin 2007, 5)

After a summer of coursework with 20 in-service teachers from the local school district, I (Author 1) stood in front of the eight who were left. One month earlier they had completed an intensive course of study on teaching with a particular focus on race. In the beginning of the summer they could not see any size, shape, or color when they looked at themselves. By the end of the summer, they had begun to see the size of their privilege, the shape of their teaching, and their color – a previously invisible whiteness on the walls of their classrooms. A year after they first came to class, two of them stood in front of the now class of seven and read their critical autoethnographic portrayals of their nights pressed against the stone of the course. This paper utilizes a narrative structure to describe the production of these two educators' critical autoethnographic self-studies (CASSs) over nine months. While this paper is focused on the fall and spring courses taught by me, the previous summer course, taught by both authors, laid the foundation for the teachers' understandings of the role whiteness and privilege played in their identity.

Hayden: I was one of those. I loved all of my students the same. I was colorblind. I was so naïve and ignorant. I was fresh out of college. I should have had the tools

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needed to meet the challenges that teachers face in the classroom today, but my multicultural classes during my undergraduate courses didn't prepare me for this.

Victoria: A few years ago, I would have told you that I didn't have a story worth telling. I would have told you that I was nobody special. Now, I reluctantly admit that I am a racist, 'white bred', American girl. The good news is, out of that realization has emerged a terrific story – one of self-discovery and revelation.

Critical White Studies and white teachers

Critical White Studies (CWS) frames the design and interpretation of this study; CWS works to critically examine whiteness as it applies to notions of institutional racism (Feagin 2000; Fredrickson 2002; Scheurich and Young 2002), dysconscious racism (King 1997), hyperpoliteness (Moon 1999) and privilege (McIntosh 1997; Rains 1998), and in relation to women (Frankenberg 1997; Mahoney 1997a, 1997b). Whiteness can also be conceptualized in relation to racial identity; Helms' (1990) theory of white identity development utilizes particular stages, beginning with the contact stage where whites experience a heightened, somewhat uncomfortable, awareness of their whiteness in the presence of people of color and finally progressing onto an autonomous white identity whereby whites are comfortable addressing race in positive and progressive ways. All of these areas can be viewed as means of situating whites in critical constructions based on power and position in various contexts. Due to the preponderance of white teachers in schools today many teacher educators focus on preparing teachers to teach diverse student populations (Dee and Henkin 2002; Dotger 2010; King, Hollins, and Hayman 1997; Major and Brock 2003; Villegas 2007) while others focus on race specifically (Aveling 2006; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, and DeFiore 2002; Johnson 2002; McIntyre 1997; Rich and Cargile 2004; Solomon et al. 2005; Swartz 2003). Yet insofar as the current work in teacher education demonstrates, white teachers are still teaching in schools of color in high numbers (Strizek et al. 2006) and the critique of white privilege, while more common in the research field, has yet to become a part of traditional programs of study. White privilege when applied to educational settings can be defined as a way in which white teachers can avoid direct discussions or critiques related to their racial position in schools. There are examinations of the use of particular pedagogical methods for working with white teachers, involving instructional methods such as autobiography (Schmidt and Finkbeiner 2006), reflection (Derman-Sparks and Phillips 1997; Khan 1999), and self-narrative (Garcia 1997) within traditional course structures. In order to address the ideas of whiteness and move awareness and understanding of white identity and the inherent privileges of white teachers to the forefront, CASS was used to design a course of inquiry.

Critical autoethnography and self-study

Autoethnography builds on work in anthropology (Spindler 1963; Tax 1964), ethnography (Spindler 2000), and critical ethnography (Foley 2002; Madison 2005; Trueba 1999). It can be defined as a method for studying the self (Reed-Danahay 1997) characterized by first-person narrative representation (Bochner and Ellis 2002; Ellis 2004) and data collection and analysis within social contexts. Autoethnographic work is intensely personal, tightly focused on the self (Spry 2001), and can be fraught with a continuous search for boundaries (Medford 2006). Autoethnography has been utilized

as a means of placing the researcher within a study along with other participants (Theoharis 2007), as a study of the self (Miller 2008) and as a methodological tool in education to examine race (Hughes 2008; Schulz 2007). This study presented autoethnography as a tool for in-service white teachers to study their identities within the context of their schools from a critical perspective. Similar to autobiographical self-study as a means for examination of teaching practices (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001), our conception of critical autoethnography was combined with the goal of self-study as stated by Samaras: 'self-study is critical examination of one's actions and the context of those actions in order to achieve a more conscious mode of professional activity' (2002, xv). In order to press for a critical stance within the realm of autoethnographic self-study, we focused on whiteness as a standpoint of critique as described by Kincheloe:

postformalists drawing on *currere* employ auto/biographical research for the purpose of attaining new levels of consciousness and more informed 'ways of being.' Teachers and students who gain such a critical ontological awareness understand how dominant cultural perspectives have helped construct their political opinions, religious beliefs, gender role, racial positions, and sexual orientation. (2005, 162)

The overriding purpose of placing the white teachers in the role of critical autoethnographers was to engage them with what Jones describes as, 'the drama of representation, legitimation, and praxis [as] a part of an ongoing dialogue between self and world about questions of ontology, epistemology, method, and praxis' (2005, 766). An example of this lies in Miller's (2008) analysis of race and Banks and Banks' description of Ron Perlias' 'The Critical Life', a critical autoethnographic piece, as a way to 'reflect on asymmetries of power, unequal opportunities to render judgments, and maldistributions of responsibility and rewards in our institutional lives' (2000, 236). Moving autoethnography into a critical space requires a particular positioning. Deconstructing whiteness in the context of our predominately white teacher education program was the standpoint of our study.

Critical autoethnographic self-study in relation to the course

The recentring of whiteness in the current study is a product of the predominately white population of the university's teacher education program. While the courses did address other educational issues related to language, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation, this paper takes a view exclusively focused on whiteness as an analytical tool for white teachers to use in their own critical autoethnographies. Autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Reed-Danahay 1997) was used by the teachers throughout a yearlong process to assist them in collecting their own data about their white identity, and how it related to their teaching. CASS was used to provide a method for self-critique rather than instructor critique, with the understanding that white teachers need to see and examine their racial identities for themselves using the principles of CWS with the teachers to analyze their racial identities within the context of their own communities and the communities of the schools where they taught. The design of the course of study focused on social justice orientation to teacher dispositions (Villegas 2007) in relation to race (Case and Hemmings 2005; Cochran-Smith 2004; Dee and Henkin 2002; Major and Brock 2003). The six credits of graduate coursework were spread out over an entire year. Three graduate credits were offered during the summer between May and August of 2005. The next three credits were spread out over the

subsequent fall and spring semesters with two credits in the fall of 2005 and one in the spring of 2006. The summer course involved three instructors, Authors 1 and 2 (white) and an additional co-instructor (black) and focused on a class of 20 teachers (18 white, one African-American, and one Native American). The subsequent fall and spring courses were taught by Author 1 and observed by Author 2. Eight teachers from the larger summer group participated. This second course focused on continued data collection, reflection, readings, and class discussions with an eye toward using auto-ethnographic methods to study white racial identity. The varieties of instructional formats (e.g. in class meetings, online discussions, and self-study) were designed not only to encourage the development of relationships between the teachers as colleagues, but also to facilitate the development of the relationship between the teachers and the university instructors along with the emphasis on personal reflection and analysis. The teachers spent time continuing to read examinations of whiteness in addition to reading about ethnography and autoethnography methods, and reading actual ethnographic and autoethnographic pieces (see Table 1). Data sources used by the teachers consisted of their reflections on the summer class activities, course readings, online discussions of readings, and book club discussions.

Critical autoethnographic self-study in relation to the study

Solorzano and Yosso describe critical race methodology as a ‘theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research

Table 1. Overview of course activities and readings.

Date	Topic	Readings	Class activities
September 1	What does research say about classroom and culture?	Bishop: Chapter 6 – Reading ethnographic research Ada and Campoy: Chapter 1 – Transformative education Jackson, Spindler, and Delgado-Gaitian	What is research? View and discuss video <i>Labores de la Vida</i> How does research interpret events? Discussion of interpretations of Hurricane Katrina, the US schooling Why does research matter? What is ethnography? Where are you now as a teacher and a researcher? How will you do research in your school?
September 15	What does ethnography have to do with it?	Bishop: Chapter 1 – Defining It Ada and Campoy: Chapter 2 – Authors in the classroom Wolcott and Geertz Frank: An ethnographic perspective The neighborhood map	GLBT guest speaker Focus on personal narratives as a means for understanding the school experiences of GLBT students and teachers Review of ethnography and introduction of the purpose of having a research question and the choices made by ethnographers in relation to questions, data, and interpretation

Table 1. (Continued).

Date	Topic	Readings	Class activities
September 29	What can YOUR ethnography say about your classroom?	Bishop: Chapter 2 – Understanding the process: a global view Ada and Campoy: Chapter 3 – The role of dialogue in the classroom Paley, Ashton-Warner Frank: Ethnographic interviews for teachers Making it explicit	Introduction to the use of theory in interpretation of schooling (e.g. constructivism, feminism, critical theory) Groups define and discuss each theory and begin to choose one to frame their inquiry
October 13	Where and how will you begin?	Bishop: Chapter 3 – Getting there and being there in person Ada and Campoy: Units 1 and 2 (Affirming self and recognizing human qualities) Foley, Behar Frank: Ethnographic case studies Reflective practice through ethnography	Complete White Identity Development Scale and discuss as a potential way to collect data using a survey and as a means of self-reflection and analysis in the context of school Discussion of additional data sources used in ethnography (fieldnotes, artifacts, interviews, reflective journaling) Sharing of data used in the study of this class (examples of fieldnotes, video tape viewing, and student interviews)
October 27	Getting the ingredients	Bishop: Chapter 4 – Understanding the process: local views Ada and Campoy: Units 3, 4, and 5 Frank: Classroom observations Culture and consciousness	Guest speaker in to discuss teaching from a multicultural perspective with a focus on the critical analysis of instructional materials
November 10	How will you write up your ethnography?	Bishop: Chapter 5 – writing it up Ada and Campoy: Units 6, 7, and 8 (Understanding the past, creating the future, discovering our capacities and strengths, learning to know) Frank: Afterword: being part of everyone else	Discussion of writing up the study Sharing the topic, theoretical frame, and possible data sources Sharing our personal narratives' racial positioning at our schools: What kind of position do you see yourself in your school? To what extent is that position based on your racial identity?

Table 1. (Continued).

Date	Topic	Readings	Class activities
November 17	What is autoethnography?	Ada and Campoy: Units 9 and 10 (Developing relationships, from yesterday to tomorrow) Ellis, Reed-Danahay, and Slattery	Methodological article reviews due Introduction to autoethnography Discussion of Slattery's (2001) autoethnography and use of theory (Foucault) and art (Pollock) Sharing of I autoethnography
December 8	Status of the class		Paper presentations using artistic representations of race as connected to your topic
January 26	What do I do with all of this data?	Valenzuela and Trueba	Bring all data to class for discussion and workshop on data analysis View 'Last chance for Eden' (Wah 2003)
February 16	Outlining the first draft	Van Mannen and Wolcott	Bring an outline of your paper Mini-writing exercises (write about an event, conversation, emotion) Example of I's autoethnography
March 9	Narrating stories (yours, mine, ours)	Behar	Bring narrative attempts to share Beliefs versus knowledge (Pajares 1992) Watch 'Black. White' (2006) reality show, take fieldnotes and interpret observations
March 30	Do you see what I see?		Bring a rough draft of paper Process writing check and work on interpreting data
April 27	Mini-conference		Final paper due and class presentations

process' (2002, 24). Examining white racial identity through CASS required an intensive yearlong focus in the courses on understanding whiteness, autoethnographic methodology, and the critical analysis of data. Critiques of previous works on whiteness in teacher education focus on the tendency of research to recenter whiteness while marginalizing teachers of color (Montecinos 2004), an inherent danger in this study as well. Therefore the need to continually critique and disrupt white privilege was the key. Data were collected over the period of all three semesters, summer, fall, and spring, and included videotapes, transcriptions, and fieldnotes, as typed by Author 2, of each class meeting as taught by Author 1, online discussion postings, written assignments, and follow-up interviews one year later: May of 2005 to May of 2006.

In order to detail the development of the teachers' critical autoethnographies, Hayden's and Victoria's work and participation are highlighted. Both teachers were white in-service teachers currently teaching in the same linguistically and culturally diverse elementary school in a mid-sized city in the Western USA. Their years of classroom experience ranged from two to five years, and both were enrolled in the university graduate master's degree program. The coursework was not a part of their regular program of study, and their enrollment was voluntary. Although all of the teachers did write critical autoethnographies, they all were not focused on race. One teacher, Darcy, wrote about her struggle with anorexia using a feminist lens and how it affected her teaching and relationships with students, and Brenda wrote about her struggle to communicate with parents using a constructivist lens. Four of the seven teachers did focus on whiteness as a standpoint of analysis in their work. Carrie examined her everyday routines and tied them to her new understanding of white privilege, while Erica connected the stages of her father's cancer development to the stages of her realization of her white privilege. Analysis of the data rested on the teachers' use of CASS to analyze their whiteness throughout the semesters. The data are presented in vignettes based on particular moments in the courses that demonstrated the teachers' work and the instructional ideas shared. The vignettes were compiled from transcripts and videotapes of the class meetings. The following section moves into a first-person narrative composed by Author 1 and focuses on three elements of the course: (1) understanding CWS, (2) understanding autoethnographic methods, and (3) understanding how to use CWS to self-critique.

Introducing Critical White Studies: summer course

June 26, 2005

The intensive three-month summer course was intensely focused on identity, race, and privilege. The teachers were exposed to activities and readings about race (Bell 1992a, 1992b; Coles 2002; Delgado 1999; Ferdman 1990; Frankenberg 1997; Howard 1999; Ignatiev 1997, 2002; Jensen 2002; Mahoney 1997a, 1997b; Pitts 2002; Wildman and Davis 1997), films about race (Wah 1994), and guest speakers who shared their counter-stories (Solorzano and Yosso 2002). One summer-course meeting was focused on whiteness and led by me:

Today we are going to talk about whiteness. I'm going to try to intellectualize some of the emotional work we have done. At this point in time we have been working on identity, who are you and who are your students. I'm going to go backwards and talk about white identity, what is predictable in white identity development because a lot of us white people have not gone through what Lea (Native American guest speaker) described today about her identity formation. Some of this is new and involves figuring out 'Oh – I am white. What does that mean?' Some of us know what it means for us but we are seeing it in a different way. Oh – it means *that*. ... I want to start with asking you to fill out a story map of your teaching history ... with you as the main character.

As the teachers write, I move to each group as they talk and share their writings. After a few minutes, I stop them and add, 'Now go back into your story and every time you name yourself I want you to put in your racial identity.' Amy asks, 'Can you explain that again?' I point to my own story draft: 'For example, I would write "My first year as a *white* teacher at Elena Elementary School I" – tell your story and name your race every time you mention yourself.' The teachers continue to write and then they share

their revised stories. I then ask, ‘Was that the first time for any of you to describe yourself racially? (Silence) Raise your hand (raises her own hand and looks around the room), who raised their hand?’ Tory (white) responds, ‘The white people.’ I nod, ‘All the white people. This is something that we are not used to doing. Why? We had a lot of speakers come and talk about race and even today we talked about labels. What does that mean? How come we as white people haven’t ever done that?’ Nancy (Native American) adds, ‘Because you are part of the dominant society and your rules are the rules that we all go by so you don’t have to do that.’ Carrie (white) interjects, ‘McIntosh (1997) states we are taught not to see our race. We are taught to not see our whiteness.’ Victoria (white) states, ‘I thought it was weird that none of us ever say I’m a European American.’ (Teachers nod and start talking). Nancy (Native American) nods and adds, ‘I thought that was weird too – why don’t you know what you are?’ Amy (white) states, ‘I feel silly saying – using that term is uncomfortable for me – saying I’m a white American even sounds more weird.’ I ask, ‘What would you rather say?’ Amy (white) answers, ‘I’m a person. I think everybody wants to say that. I don’t want to be defined.’ The teachers begin talking among themselves. I begin:

We don’t really talk about it. That’s why today we are going to focus on whiteness. Not to privilege it because it already has a spot but to critique it, a lot of you are white. I am white. So what does that mean? Why do we want to be colorblind? ... There are people who study whiteness and its dominance and those are the people that you’ve read for this week ... if we don’t start the conversation then we think it will go away. It does for most of us ... Why is race hard for white people to talk about? We don’t have practice; we don’t have a language for it. That’s why it feels so uncomfortable. We are also socialized into a hyperpoliteness thinking that it’s rude to talk about race, yet we do it via code words as we talk about certain neighborhoods and populations such as at-risk and urban. So we are talking about race as whites but not very well and in very indirect ways which is more insidious than overt racism. Sometimes silence is the prevalent form of racism, looking the other way, not hugging a student as much as another student or avoiding a parent. The intersection of teachers and kids is the required relationship of school and that’s where we all are. It’s very different for most white people in that you as teachers are leaving your own neighborhood to go into another, wherever you are teaching. Today we will talk about the intersection of you as a teacher with your students.

The teachers present their interpretations of the readings on whiteness to the large group. The white identity (Tatum 1997) group presents the six stages of white identity development by drawing pictures and explaining each stage. The Race Traitor (Ignatiev 1997) group shares the behaviors that exemplify a race traitor. Another group explains Frankenberg’s (1997) description of white privilege and what a good neighborhood means. One group shares Mahoney’s (1997a, 1997b) piece on women, whiteness and oppression. As Wildman and Davis’ (1997) work on racism, sexism, and privilege is compared to McIntosh’s (1997) privilege with Amy adding, ‘They talk about how you can be a racist and not think you are. For the first time I thought I’ll never fully understand and I’ll always be taking some advantages’, I begin to recount my experience with my whiteness:

I have been privileged my whole life ... I’ve never been overtly racist to anyone. I was a nice teacher. I didn’t think I was racist ... Knowing and understanding what it means to benefit from white privilege constantly was a huge realization for me. So a lot of the things that you all have been through (in the course) I have been through ... What Critical White Studies does is take a critical view towards whiteness to say if you are a white teacher you need to be aware ... I doubt any of us are overtly racist ... but on a daily

basis it's the covert racism. For me personally it's what I don't do ... everyone has their own answers.

Fall course: what is autoethnographic research? Framing research questions and collecting data

September 1, 2005

The fall course began with a review of what ethnographic research is in relation to their classrooms:

Now what we are doing after the summer is going back to your school. What does all this mean now? You're going to be thinking about what you need to do based on what you are learning and reading about in relation to ethnography and then autoethnography specifically. That's why all of the mini-writing assignments are up to you. You are taking on your own context ... all of the stories that happen in your classroom, any of those can be your mini-writing assignments – an anecdotal record of the event of that day. You want to introduce the event with a paragraph that tells us why you are sharing it. What does it mean about the context where I am teaching, what it means for me as a teacher. You will write a prospectus for December and then set up your paper for completion in the spring.

The first activity was designed to present notions of researcher perspective; I asked the teachers to write the most important thing about specific topics in general and then about their school. They began with a discussion of the most important thing about Hurricane Katrina, which had occurred three days earlier. The teachers found that they did not agree on what was important, and they had various interpretations of the event. After sharing their thoughts, I stated:

You had to think about what was important to you ... that is what we are going to be doing. You each have a unique perspective. As a researcher you have the power to pick what is important. There is a preponderance of data you are going to gather. When you think of what Shirley Brice Heath (1983) did. She still had to figure out what was important. She had to choose whose story to tell ... how you are going to gather your data and state who you are? What is the most important thing about your classroom? Your students?

The group of teachers discusses a research video of interviews of educators (Guajardo et al. 2002). I ask the teachers, 'Is that research?' Hayden states, 'I think that's powerful because it's their personal experience.' Other teachers add their thoughts about the power of narrative and the decisions made by the research about what to include and why. I ask:

What is the most important thing about what is going on in your classroom right now? Your topic will morph and change a bit over time but we will set the problem/concern or research topic in a critical theoretical context. You will begin to analyze all of the data you have collected, we will use your mini-writes and our discussions ... Every two weeks we'll talk about the conclusions you are coming to so far with an eye toward recommendations you can make for yourself as a researcher and as a teacher ... The field will be your classroom ... You will spend a lot of time describing what you do. Then we will stop to think about what you do and why based on where you are now as a teacher and what you want to know. We'll find it as we go along.

The class ends with various examples and definitions of ethnography, from tracing its roots in anthropology (Geertz 1973) to educational ethnographic works (Jackson

1968; Spindler [1974] 2000; Wolcott 1994), coupled with short descriptions of intensive fieldwork, various paradigmatic views, and methods of representation (Van Maanen 1988).

The role of interpretation in research

September 29, 2005

At the next class meeting the teachers had read about various paradigms (Flor Ada and Campoy 2004) such as feminism, constructivism, and critical theory. The paradigms were used to demonstrate how various lenses can be used for viewing events. The teachers brought up Hurricane Katrina as an event to analyze from various perspectives and gave examples of various views presented by the news media of the victims, from 'warm and fuzzy montages of people helping' to 'shows highlighting the shootings and looting.' Race came up as a factor being addressed and ignored by particular media outlets such as The Today Show, National Public Radio, and Black Entertainment Television. Victoria shared her views, 'I got most of my facts and stuff from the Today Show; I remember the stories of rescues and stories of people giving to these people who are homeless and taking people in and families being reunited and just the heartwarming stuff like that.' One white teacher, Tory, brought in critical race theory as, 'looking at things are not working for part of the population.' I added, 'Just as your own view constructs how you see events ... when you get all of your data you are going to see what you see, if you gave me your data I may not see the same thing. If you passed it around to everyone it would be different.' Several of the white teachers continued to discuss the hurricane and the news coverage of the event, and the only African-American teacher, Nia, began to talk:

I looked at the inhumanity. It was so blatant to me. When you have people who have been holed up without food and water for days and you meet them with M16s. I broke down and cried ... the bias that was so obvious. When blacks were getting food they were looting and when whites were getting food they were finding it. When blacks wouldn't leave their home they were ignorant, and when whites wouldn't leave their homes they were heroes.

The discussion continued and moved into a critique of the event based on race. Then the teachers discussed how researchers construct their data based on their lens. I add, 'You need to think about which lens you gravitate to the most. It's important for your study to know one really well so you are able to say I am using this lens, this theory to look at my work. Tonight you are going to pick one so you can get a handle on your data.'

The discussion then moves to reading excerpts from Paley's (1979) *White Teacher*, followed by Geertz (1973) and analysis of their work as related to Bishop's (1999) book about ethnographic methods. The Paley excerpt describes her work as a white teacher and how she comforts a crying African-American child named Alma and the Geertz excerpt is focused on his description of the Balinese cockfight. I ask, 'What does Paley mean when she uses the term "sing song voice" when describing how she comforted Alma? What is she doing?' Carrie, 'She's describing her interpretation of the scene.' I ask, 'What was the outcome of that?' Carrie, 'The little girl felt better.' I respond, 'Did Paley know why Alma felt better?' Carrie, 'No, she's making that assumption.' I go on to discuss the power of the author's and researcher's interpretation through word choice and setting the scene. Hayden adds, 'But it makes me

wonder, too, where is Paley going to go with it? Is she going to keep it focused on her and her reactions to just that one student, or is she going to look at how it affects her classroom?’ The group begins to talk about the purpose of their papers, and how research should inform teaching. They then turn back to ethnographic representation. Erica, ‘In Bishop’s book it says ethnographic inquiry emanates from a phenomenological base that seeks to understand social behavior from the participant’s frame of reference. Paley’s looking at it through Alma’s eyes; Alma’s culture for her was probably a lot different since she was the only African-American student in the class.’ I reply, ‘Right. So that one criterion does apply to what Paley did. What about Geertz?’ Tory interjects, ‘Well, I think that’s the more traditional view of ethnography where you are a dispassionate observer, just sort of documenting as if you’re an objective lens ... (Geertz) has this dispassionate, sort of, very disconnected view. Obviously Paley is the total opposite, very connected, very passionate.’ Hayden adds, ‘I agree with that. Paley’s more personal where you connect with her because she’s giving you what she was thinking and worrying about and wondering what to do. Where Geertz is just impersonal and separated from what’s going on.’ Erica nods, ‘He’s telling their stories.’ I ask, ‘What would Bishop say about that?’ Victoria responds, ‘Well, doesn’t it say you have to study the culture from that culture’s point of view? So how is he getting that culture’s point of view if it’s just him observing and not getting any feedback from them?’ I ask, ‘Can you do that?’ Nia, ‘That’s the point that I want to make about Paley. Why is it that we have a hard time understanding that she’s looking at her culture? She’s looking at white culture. White people do have culture. (She turns to face the class) You do have a culture. So we can look at somebody else’s culture besides people of color.’ I nod and confirm, ‘Right.’ Hayden, ‘Yes. She brings that up.’ Wanting to move the conversation on to move to critiquing Paley’s white perspective I add, ‘But to pick on her a bit, as far as the way she’s written it, what do you think she *thinks* she’s writing about? White culture?’ Tory responds, ‘No, no, no. I think she thinks she’s writing about ...’ Nia interrupts, ‘The black child.’ I elaborate, ‘Yes, so looking at the language and how she’s writing. When you’re doing autoethnography, you have the right to use your voice, it’s your construction of your self in relation to what you’re seeing in your classroom, but I want to also critique your interpretation.’ Hayden, ‘To me, it’s honest ... She felt guilty, she felt like she had to do something, but she didn’t want to do the wrong thing, and I connected to that.’ I add, ‘She depicts the dilemmas that teachers feel all the time. That part is there, and it does make you feel some affinity for her. She’s at least admitting some of these things ... So what do you think you will write about?’ Victoria:

I’m thinking of doing the autoethnography on my self and just looking at how my view as a teacher back when I first started even in my undergrad – how this process of being in this program has changed my thinking and my teaching. I want to study the changes I go through during this process and see why certain behaviors are present. For example, I’ve noticed that I automatically assume that Caucasian students will be higher-achieving than minority students. Why is this so? We all tend to think that – it’s programmed in by many factors; I can remember getting a new African-American student and being surprised that she classified herself as a really good reader. She was right, but why did I initially assume otherwise? I guess my main focus would maybe be to study how my assumptions about students are changing over time as I get to know families in my community better.

Hayden, ‘I think this is my question. How to validate both majority minority languages and minority languages in my classroom?’ I nod, ‘Good. Okay. Do you

know what view you're going to take now?' Hayden, 'Feminist theory with critical race theory.' Victoria, 'Critical race theory.' The class session ends as the other teachers share their ideas and with more discussions of the readings about ethnography and an introduction of autoethnography using an autoethnographic paper written by me. At this point in time, Victoria was comfortable with her topic and her use of race to view herself. Hayden had committed to a critical perspective for the first time.

Deconstructing an autoethnography

November 17, 2005

I share the steps related to autoethnographic work, including formulating a question, interpreting and using theory, data collection, analysis, and writing. I share my autoethnography critiquing my whiteness and then the teachers begin to discuss the symbolism and use of theory in the Slattery (2001) picture and article on autoethnography. I expand:

You learned something here. You're looking at a very personal symbolic story. It's great to write about yourself; you learn, but it also needs to inform someone ... That's one of the things about autoethnography is that **by examining your own self and data, you can come to some conclusions.** So select a story – your kids, you, or both ... You're going to have a lot of data, not just data that you've written down but just your experiences in that context. You need to **pick a couple of things that are pivotal and write about those well.** You do have to **pick salient things** and that makes your writing easier and it makes it a lot deeper and more compelling. Show rather than tell which means showing action, dialog, and gestures. **Write your paper as a coherent story with a beginning, middle, and end.** This is the messy part, where writing becomes a tool. Write to find out what it is that you know and you've experienced, but it's also a process of inquiry. You're going to, or you should, **find out things about yourself as you write it ...** Anything important enough to be written about is not going to be simple, so try to embrace those things that aren't just black and white ... Even the situations you were all talking about tonight – you could all start your paper with each one of the scenarios that you described ... You want to **make sure at the end there's some resolution or hope, even if you're not completely there yet.** You do not have to write anything that you don't want anybody else to see. But in some of your draft writings, I would ask you to give yourself permission to go all the way there just to see what comes out. **On the other side of that, if you hold back too much, you're not going to say anything.** One of the important things about writing about your experience as a teacher is that you have to say something or there's no point. Don't wait until you have everything figured out before you start to write because it's just never going to happen ... Then I hope over Christmas you kind of just let it rest. It's like making bread. Just leave it alone and let it rise and then in January, come back. By the end of your paper and that's the hopeful part, you want to have some sort of answer. Even if your answer is well, this is where I am now and I don't know ... Then you will bring in the literature, the readings you use to support your area of study. What does this mean for your teaching?

The first drafts: autoethnographic voices

March 9, 2006

The teachers met on January 26, 2006 and discussed what to do with all of their data. They read Valenzuela (1999), Foley (2002), and Trueba (1999) and brought all of their data, their reflections, their fieldnotes, and their readings, to class. In February they revised the first draft of their paper in class together and read Frank (1999), Van Manen (1988), and Wolcott (1994). In March we gather in the university classroom

having read excerpts from Behar (1993, 1996) and Ashton-Warner (1963) after some discussion about writing samples from their favorite authors; they each take turns reading excerpts from their first narrative paper drafts. They stop and start and ask questions as they support these first public attempts to understand how to represent their ideas in print.

Hayden's first draft

Hayden stands at the front of the room, 'The main thing I want to get are your ideas. Is my language okay? Because I feel like I'm talking to somebody rather than writing something professional. This is what I have started.' She puts her paper on the screen, and the students read it silently. A teacher comments, 'I love the title.' Hayden smiles and reads the title aloud, 'Saying gracias doesn't fix everything: the deeper issues of language and race in the classroom.' She pauses and explains, 'So these are just my beginning ideas. It feels really loose and not very professional. Do you want me to just read it?' The teachers nod.

Your multicultural education classes as an undergrad won't prepare you for this. The effects of language culture and race in the classroom are far more direct and more engrossing than I had ever imagined they would be. This was my second year as an elementary school teacher. I was fresh out of college. I should have had the tools needed to meet the challenges that teachers face in the classroom today ... As our student population is becoming increasingly diverse, the reality is that collectively, the teaching force has remained the same: middle class, female, and white. You may wonder what race has to do with it. I have come to realize that race has everything to do with it. My classroom is made up of 22 students: 16 Hispanic students, two Tongan students, two African-American students, one Caucasian student, and one Filipino student ... I am convinced that I have learned much more from my students than they have from me. The most important realization is that saying gracias doesn't fix everything. I decided that one way to bridge the language differences in my classroom was to begin infusing Spanish vocabulary into my curriculum. Little did I know where that would take me! Many issues have come up in my classroom since I made the conscious decision to validate the language and cultural identities of the students entrusted to me. I hope to tell that story here.

Hayden stops reading and turns to look at the screen behind her. Author 2 says, 'Wow.' Another teacher adds, 'Holy moly? How long have you been writing that?' Hayden smiles and reads on, 'Here I started with a little – so I started just talking about a little scenario ... this is a story that you guys have heard before':

Where it all began

It was my first attempt to show my students that I valued their culture and wanted to bring their language into our classroom ... My class was sitting on the floor spread out in front of me. Forty-four eyes waiting to see what my next move would be. I had my regular 'front row' of students, those who always like to be right next to me. I had my typical fringe students as well, those that would sit as far away as they possibly could without being obvious enough that I would have to ask them to move closer. I pulled my book out and read the title, *In My Family/En Mi Familia*, by Carmen Lomas Garza ... I began reading, Spanish first. It was as if I was transformed into a magnet. All of a sudden I had more than half of my class practically on top of me. Even a few boys that always sat off to the side and were often distracted or talking had rushed forward in an effort to be closer to the book. They were touching the pages, pointing to words, correcting my pronunciation ... Then I glanced up, past the swarm of excited fingers and negotiating meanings, I saw the remainder of my class. About seven students remained in

their original locations. One student picked at a small tear along the cuff on his jeans. Two girls were having a side conversation.

Hayden stops reading and looks up, 'Do you want me to read more?' Everyone says 'Yes.' Hayden continues reading. 'Liana,' Hayden stops to add, 'See I already changed her name.' Everyone laughs – protecting their participants' identities had been a topic of conversation about the research process.

Liana, a Tongan student and one of the highest achieving students in my classroom, peered at me with her head slightly tilted down. Her eyes were full of tears. Why wasn't she participating? There were so many words that she could figure out if she listened to their roots. She *always* participates. Shaken, I resumed my position and continued interacting with the excited group that had control over me. 'I will talk to her later,' I told myself. When the story was done, the Hispanic students in my class begged for more. 'Later,' I promised. I was so thrilled by the renewed vitality and energy that I could feel in my room. I got up thinking, 'Hmm – that changed the tables didn't it.' For much of their schooling, Spanish-speaking students must feel the way the 'outsiders' did today: uninterested, unconnected, and unsure of meaning. I had the sudden urge to say, 'Now you know how *they* feel.' I stopped myself before those words escaped my lips ... I felt a mixture of emotions: excited, empowered, but also a bit confused and anxious. What had I begun? The simple act of reading a story to my class opened a new world within our classroom ... All results were not positive. I asked Liana to come have lunch with me the next day ... She immediately denied being upset. 'You looked like you were ready to cry. I am asking you because I could tell that something was wrong.' Her reply took me off guard, 'I hate Spanish.' I was stunned. I lost all possible responses. How could this respectful, caring, and thoughtful student say something so blatant? 'Why?' ... One day, I realized that I was sending a strong message to my class. At the top of the board was a compelling phrase. I began to think. Who was I giving power to in my classroom? Was that power equal? The answer was obvious. It was, in fact, staring me in the face. '¡Yo soy poderoso!' (I am powerful.) It was written only in Spanish.

Hayden stops, 'So here are my ideas for continuing. The need for balance and validating students' identities is immeasurably important. I began to validate one group more so than others. I told my class that I was trying to learn Spanish.' Hayden looks at her paper as she talks. 'There's a whole story that goes along with that. And then letters which I'll show you ... and there is Shay's story. I haven't figured out [how] to work that into the story yet ... this is the letter that I wrote to Liana after the sign issues, and it was just to address the fact that she did not like the fact that I was using Spanish...' Hayden puts the letters on the screen and begins to read the letters from the student. All the teachers sigh as Hayden smiles. 'A little while later she brought in the vocabulary ... we translated the words safe strong free ... I told her I wanted to be her pen pal.' Hayden's story continues with her reading two more letters they exchanged where they agreed to learn Tongan and Spanish together. Hayden continues, 'I need to know what else to do. Does it sound unprofessional?' The group says 'no' loudly and Hayden smiles, 'I worry about how I'm going to get the research in there because I feel like it would be so different than my writing.' I interject, 'Don't change anything – I can help you with the research later.' Hayden, 'That's the fun part. This didn't feel like a paper to me because I am writing about my class and my kids.' A teacher adds, 'That's what teachers need to read.' Hayden, 'Any suggestions? I want to show how complex this is and how I have this going on but there are 20 other things going on at the same time ... because it's been messy in my classroom, but good messy.' The teachers ask about particular students, and how they act in the room. They discuss the paper and how she wrote about the events, complimenting her on her descriptions of

the students and her feelings, and how to begin to interpret her actions. Hayden makes notes on her paper.

Victoria's first draft

Victoria stays in her seat as the group turns to look her way: 'I'll go next but mine's not that good. It's not a story, it's just chunks of some stuff, and I don't have a catchy title yet' (everyone laughs). Victoria begins to explain, 'I don't know if this is going to end up being the beginning or – I'll just read it first.'

(This course) started out as something different altogether ... Besides, it was just another multicultural education class. 'I've got this. I know this stuff. I'm around these kids every day.' It couldn't hurt to learn about some new strategies to help my students. I was in!

Still seated, Victoria stops, 'So I'm just kind of talking about my naïve vision of what the class was supposed to be [the others are laughing] so then here's my next chunk.'

I grew up in a family that believed 'we were all God's children', that believed 'everyone was the same', that believed 'we shouldn't judge someone by the color of their skin.' It sounds familiar, doesn't it? They are probably the same words some of your own parents said to you growing up. The truth is most of us would have a hard time labeling our families as white racists. That word has such a negative impact on our psyche that we run from it like the plague. What we don't stop to realize is that white racists can be 'good' people. They can be some of the most well-intentioned people on the planet. But like they say, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions.'

A teacher comments, 'That's so good.' Victoria continues, 'Here's my next chunk [smiling] not related to this – this one has Author 2 in it!' (others begin laughing with her as they look over at Author 2):

I'll never forget staring at my professor (Author 2) the day she proclaimed she was a racist. I was in shock to say the least. She was a professor; I had grown to respect and admire. More than that, I really liked her because she was just a really nice person. She was the kind of person who always made sure to tell you how great you were. As she continued talking I realized that her definition of racism didn't mean cruel overt actions against another race but simply not being fully aware and empathetic of another's situation. It was a definition I was struggling to understand. Couldn't we use a name for it that was a little nicer than 'racist'?

Victoria stops reading and looks up. Positive comments float about the room. Victoria states, 'So I just have to figure out how to make it all go together.' I state, 'Yes, you have all of those little episodes. The linking part will come. We can talk about that more next week. Now that I know what you have ...'

Analysis in process: autoethnographic representation 'Do you see what I see?'

March 30, 2006

I begin the class by stating, 'You are going to share your writing. I want you to use us. Tell us what feedback you want. Make us work for you. If you start censoring your voice you're lost.' The teachers talk about their writing process; some read excerpts from their favorite books, brought to show narrative writing structures. They discuss voice and language use and their feelings about their students. Victoria begins, 'I'm

kind of trying to write mine in a way to show that I'm dealing with these issues and if you are too then that's okay. I don't want it to be intimidating or to turn people off.'

Victoria's second draft

(At) our annual fifth grade parent night ... we invited the parents of our school to join us for some math games. The purpose was not only to make parents more comfortable with the math program, but also to help them feel welcome communicating with the principal and teachers. At 5:15, there were two families from all three fifth grades present and one mother that came alone. As we waited for families to arrive, we had started a conversation among ourselves about what we were planning on doing when we went off-track ... Sometimes, even in the midst of racial enlightenment, you do something you are so ashamed of that you begin to wonder if you really 'got it' to begin with. It hit me like a ton of bricks ... there we teachers were conversing among ourselves ... only to shut out the families we had invited. I suddenly felt sick to my stomach. I looked around and saw the mother that had arrived by herself, just sitting there looking nervously around. I wanted to go talk to her, but I wasn't sure how much English she spoke. Would I be able to explain the games to her? Would she know how to do fifth-grade math? Would it make her feel even worse if I tried to explain it to her and she couldn't do it? These were the thoughts that were going through my head as I walked past her several times pretending to mingle. I politely smiled at the other families while deep down I was going through this inner turmoil. If I couldn't attempt to break down this barrier, I was nothing but a hypocrite. How could I tell others about the importance of fighting racism, if I was acting as a racist myself? I took a deep breath, and sat down across the table from her. 'Hola. Do you want to play a game?' It was the first time that night that I saw her smile, and for the first time in my life I felt like I could actually do this. I did it. It was turning from words into actions ... and it felt good.

Victoria stops, 'That's it. But the formatting – I was thinking [of using] ... how the Bible is set up? In the beginning and then there's a section called exodus which is like the going out ... and then revelation which would be like the enlightenment.' Hayden, 'I'm excited to see how you're going to put all of the pieces together.' Another teacher talks about being afraid of parents at her school and the conversation turns to analyzing events they have experienced at school with an eye toward race. I then move the conversation back to the papers, 'That's why your vignettes are so powerful ... you are taking an everyday event and reinterpreting it critically ... your feelings are our window into a new way of seeing.'

Hayden elects to discuss her second draft ideas rather than read her paper: 'I haven't done anything new. I've been thinking about some different ways to add things ... bringing other students into the story so it's not just me and one student.' I ask, 'Are you happy with the format?' Hayden, 'I think so ... I like the way that it just feels natural to me.' I ask, 'How are you going to integrate the academic readings? I would attend to definitions, terms, if you're using racism explain why you are doing that.' I give examples of sentences embedding theory and how to use endnotes and define racism. They all begin to help each other for the rest of the class meeting and teach each other how to insert endnotes and footnotes on their computers.

The critiques: last class meeting

April 27, 2006

I stand in front of the class: 'I'd like you to read your papers ... let us know what you need from us as readers ... Is that okay with everyone?' The room is silent, as they all

look down; slowly they begin to volunteer to share. Victoria begins, 'So basically I stayed kind of on the same track I was on. I was trying to tie everything together and put in the endnotes, whatever you call them so I added a beginning, subheadings and a title. So my title is, "I'm a racist, and so are you: If you were suddenly offended KEEP READING!"' The other teachers laugh as Victoria smiles. Erica smiles, 'I like that.' Victoria adds, 'So I'll just read my introduction and then kind of show what my headings are.' Victoria begins to read aloud to the group as they follow her text on the screen:

Everyone has a story. In fact, I believe everyone has a story worth writing down. Not necessarily because it is particularly exciting, but because I think we could all learn a great deal from one another.

She stops to adjust her paper, 'So then my first heading is "In the beginning", so that first part I just shared how I thought the class was going to be different, then my next one is looking to the past and this part is new.'

A look into the past ... If you were to rewind to the 1980s and take a drive through the neighborhood where I grew up, you'd see one thing – white. White picket fences, clean white sidewalks, freshly painted white trim on the houses, and most obviously, white neighbors. In fact, I can't remember a single person of color that lived in my neighborhood. To be honest, I never thought much of it. I never questioned it. I never even considered it! I didn't harbor ill feelings toward anyone of other cultures, I simply was ignorant to the situations they dealt with, trying to survive in a society that continually tried to marginalize them. I was a racist. The summer of 2005 held some of the most powerfully transforming experiences in my journey, yet interestingly it was so intense that it wasn't until looking back and processing it all that it began to make sense.

Victoria stops again and explains, 'Then I go back to that same part about what my family believed and all that. I just want to make sure that I'm on the right track with the whole endnote thing because I put my little note at the end, I just want to make sure what I'm writing is on the right track. So for my endnote I wrote':

Gary Howard portrays the idea that in order to fight racism we must 'go beyond "appreciating other cultures"' (Howard 1999, 20). In the same way, I view racism as simply the inability of a person to recognize their lack of understanding toward other cultures.

Victoria adds, 'Then I talked about reviewing the video [of our class in the summer] and the day Author 2 said she was a racist.' Victoria looks at Author 2 and smiles as she turns the pages of her paper. Victoria continues, 'And then the next one is from theory to actions.'

From theory to actions ... I know what you're thinking. 'Get that teacher's name and school so we can get her fired.' At the least, you're probably hoping that your child never ends up in the classroom of a racist. Unfortunately for our children, many teachers (whether or not they admit it) are racist. I'm not talking about a bunch of white women walking around calling children of color obscene names. I'm simply bringing to light the fact that almost any white teacher would say they 'celebrate diversity', yet don't truly understand what that means. To many, it's merely an after-school activity where people come to eat foods from different countries ... I'm not trying to bash the hardworking teachers that dedicate their lives to children. Many of them are truly doing the best they can, but that doesn't change the fact that they are uninformed. Even before it became obvious to me that I was missing the boat, it was never hard for me to work with diverse

kids. I never resented the fact that language was sometimes an obstacle, I didn't always send home announcements in Spanish, and I don't remember ever being puzzled that parents were never available to chaperone field trips. The scary thing is, that sometimes racism is so subtle, such an underlying current that we don't even recognize its presence. Therein lies the problem. So, what next? I was at the point where I knew I needed to change, but doing something about it demanded a lot more than just being able to talk a good story.

Victoria stops reading, 'And then I tell the story about the fifth-grade parent night. My last subheading is revelation, and I think I already shared the part when I talked to my sister. So then I end the paper with':

I wish I could say that the story stops here with the happy ending, but life is never that easy, and neither is dealing with issues of racism. If the story doesn't continue it means that my fight against social injustice has ceased to exist. In truth, the story should never really end because the search for truth should be a lifelong journey. Unfortunately, there will always be those who deny that racism exists and a growing population of diverse citizens who will suffer at the hands of a dominant society that sometimes doesn't even realize the harm they are causing. If on this journey I am unable to change anyone's mind but my own, I have done a good thing. But, if people will open their minds to the possibility that maybe all of this makes sense ... only then will we truly see our world change.

Victoria adds, 'And that's the end.' The class claps as she gathers up her paper. She takes a moment to read the remaining two footnotes aloud:

In this paper, diverse should be understood as anyone who is of a different culture from my own. Because our school is primarily Hispanic, we are not necessarily diverse in the sense that many different ethnic groups are present. When I speak about 'white dominance', I am referring to Gary Howard's definition from his book ... He states, 'As White people experiencing the world from our social position of dominance, we often fail, on an individual level, to identify with the collective group history that has been the foundation for establishing our dominance.' (Howard 1999, 30)

Victoria asks, 'I don't know if you guys had a sense – I'm struggling – I don't know. I feel like it ties everything together really well in some parts ... I don't know if I need to add more research in the notes.' I respond, 'You've got your overview and then you've got the turning point. The turning point is the summer; the parent night is a specific example. Do you have any examples before the turning point that show how you used to think?' Victoria, 'I could definitely add the first time we read the Howard book ... my reflections talk about how ... I'm not a racist and that's not me.' I add, 'Good, then we get a sense of where you are now. You can bring us in as readers to talk about how you used to feel.'

Hayden goes up to the computer screen to share her final draft:

Most of my paper is still there. I tried to organize it a little better and add in interpretation of the letters. Some of the things I added I didn't feel like they were that compelling. So I just want to make sure that it doesn't go downhill. My introduction is the same. Then I start talking about my story about reading the book to the kids. I did what we talked about last time about adding Shay into the story to introduce her so I can talk about her later so I stuck her in there.

After reading new sections on reflection, Hayden adds:

This is a new section I added: Crisis containment. So this is all about Shay and her using Spanish and I talk about how it brought in a lot more than just language but into social skills and how race was seen by her ... and this part I don't know if it's just not well written.

Everyone encourages her to go on:

Taking risks in the classroom does not happen without doubt, dilemma, and difficulties. Throughout the process of allowing my students to gain their voice and see themselves in the curriculum, I have encountered many situations that have been unexpected and have caused me to stop in my tracks. At times, I hesitated, fearful of making a mistake that could undo the accomplishments that we had made. However, you cannot sit back timidly in a dynamic classroom, especially if you are the teacher! 'Shay's saying bad words.' The complaint did not surprise me. I gave a short exasperated sigh and asked what was happening. 'She's saying bad words to me in Spanish.' Well, that in itself was interesting, seeing as how Shay didn't speak Spanish. 'Did you tell her that the words were bad?' I asked, thinking that perhaps she picked some words up on the playground and was not aware of their meaning. I watched the accuser walk over to Shay and explain that the words she was using were inappropriate. Her face squished up into that all too familiar attitude; eyebrows raised, and lip curled at one side. I could tell that she was not in the mood to cooperate.

Hayden, 'I had a hard time trying to figure out how to use my vignettes.' Victoria starts laughing, 'I can picture her.' Hayden acts her out, mimicking her student's face. Victoria adds, 'That is such a good description.' Hayden reads again:

This was just the first in a series of complaints that were launched against Shay ... When I confronted her about the inappropriate words, her comeback was an automatic defense. 'They don't like me 'cause I'm black.' How was I supposed to handle this situation? First of all, I knew that the students' main problems with Shay were not due to the fact that she was black. It was her behavior. I watched her in class every day. She was insecure and felt ugly. She battled everyone around her. She was a sad example of a child who has been hurt and keeps everyone at a distance to make herself feel safe. If she didn't care about anyone, then it wouldn't hurt if they didn't care about her. As untrue as this belief was, I knew that it was her defense mechanism ... She fought against herself and everything around her. Shay lacked social skills and the ability to communicate with others. She was serviced through special education and also had consistent sessions with the school counselor in a peer group, but without working on the personal issues, not much was changing. She lacked friendships and therefore did not have many opportunities to work on her skills with people who she could trust. But there I was. 'Shay, I don't think your skin color has anything to do with this. I think it has more to do with how you sometimes treat people in our class.' I continued to try to explain that the words she was using were inappropriate. I thought that the situation was handled, but it kept occurring. Shay using bad words in Spanish or offending someone with made up Spanish, students complaining, and Shay left with hurt feelings ... She had figured out and knew, rather instinctively, that language was a strong bond between Spanish speakers in our classroom. If she could gain access to their language, she would gain access to them. Her plan was not extremely successful, but it opened a new point of view that I was lacking.

Victoria, 'What are you talking about, not well written?' Others agree, supporting Hayden's paper. Hayden continues, 'And then in a last minute hurrah I added some personal transformations. And part of this I took from my reflections from last semester but then I wasn't sure if it fit enough with everything else I said.'

Until a year ago, I lived in a naïve state of mind where I did not think that racism was a problem anymore. Through listening to others' experiences and thinking more critically

about the institutions that I am a part of, it has become clear to me that institutional racism is a very prominent factor of our society today. It is an unseen issue by many white Americans. It is not widely discussed, perhaps because of the reaction that it receives. White dominance has blinded so many Americans that they cannot get past their idea that if others work hard enough they can achieve anything they want ... The truth is, we are not playing on an equal playing field. There are many factors in life that we do not have control over ... The ramifications of institutional and societal racism are devastating. As an educator, my desire is for each of my students to be successful. The measures of success should not depend on language, race, ethnicity, or culture.

Hayden stops reading her paper and smiles, 'I kind of go on a rant here.'

My students should have equal access to a high academic education and college graduate programs that white middle and upper class students are assumed an immediate right to. The reality is that they do not. Their language and customs are still treated as a deficit rather than an asset. They are not regarded with the same promise and respect as other children across town. They are being silenced through the discouragement of using their native languages ... They are already becoming conscious of their roles in society. They see so much. My job, I feel, is not just to impart my own knowledge to my class. Education shouldn't be something that is done to a child, but rather an interactive experience where students are able to construct meaning and make connections between what they learn and their own experiences. Our students have so much to teach us. We must first stop to listen. Respect must be mutual. Respecting the children of our nation requires us to end deficit views of language diversity and become advocates for the rights for all students to have dignity.

Hayden, 'I never really address the other stuff so I don't know.' The class claps and I ask, 'Do you have any questions?' One teacher adds, 'I want you to fix it to make it all better. Not your paper, but the situation.' Hayden responds, 'I don't really have an answer, but there are a couple of things that have been really hard ... My kids were fighting with each other, and I was crying all the time because I couldn't believe that they could be so mean to each other after we had accomplished so much. It's hard because I don't know how much of that to address in my paper.' Another teacher adds, 'I think your paper is tremendously well written and any teacher who reads and truly listens to your message will be a better teacher for it.' Hayden, 'Thank you – I feel like there are things that are unclear, that maybe I'm making assumptions that my reader knows something that maybe they don't.' I interject, 'Scroll back to the section on personal transformations. So do you disagree with Shay that they don't like her because she's black?' Hayden answers, 'But she's not the only black kid in class.' I continue, 'Why is she insecure and think she's ugly?' Hayden, 'I don't know ... she is so complex that I don't really know how to go there.' Victoria adds, 'Maybe for you, your relationship with her is not about race, but maybe it is between her and the kids ... you don't ever ask the kids if they are mean to her because she's black.' Hayden responds, 'Well actually they had a fight over the not black issue. The white girl told Shay that being friends with a black girl is too complicated so she didn't want to be her friend.' I ask, 'So the girls have made it about race?' Hayden nods, 'They would have.' Other teachers discuss race and picking on students for racial reasons. Hayden asks the group, 'So should I take it further?' Carrie answers, 'I love your paper, but when you are saying some of those things about Shay it's coming off as dismissive.' Hayden interjects, nodding, 'That's probably how I see it.' Carrie continues, 'She speaks English so ... she doesn't have words that she can bring to teach the class like the Tongan girl or that Spanish girl ... what is Shay going to do to connect?'

Hayden responds, ‘Shay tried with African – she makes it up. That is something that I need to address. I think I am dismissive. It’s like 20 things a day. How do you address everything?’ Others comment on the paper positively. Hayden interrupts, ‘It felt like I was preaching.’ I respond, ‘You’re explaining the larger picture for your story ... You don’t have to have the answers, just keep writing.’ Hayden, ‘So just the fact that I’ve done these things doesn’t mean that it’s over.’ Victoria, ‘I agree. I’m wondering how it will end up. I don’t want your paper to end.’ Erica adds, ‘Admit that it’s not done.’

Understanding Critical White Studies: CASS as a means of contextualizing white critique and the stages of white identity development

In general, data analysis revealed that the use of critical autoethnography was beneficial as a means for the teachers to explore and critique their white identity and connect their understandings to each other as colleagues and to their classroom teaching. Both teachers demonstrated an understanding of their white racial identity in the following ways. Victoria used CWS and critiqued her whiteness, as it applied to her school and her interactions with her family. Hayden struggled with using a critical race stance in the beginning and focused on language initially; her brief exploration of Shay and race was tentative, as she tried to avoid making an analysis on the basis of race. Racial identity understanding and critique move in minute increments. Hayden understood race conceptually but was not prepared to completely engage in racial analysis of her own understanding of Shay. As the instructor, I did not push any of the teachers; I questioned them at times but did not press for particular interpretations, choosing to use modeling and storytelling up until the end. This was a deliberate decision that was founded on the knowledge that pushing the teachers to recognize race in particular ways was not a part of autoethnographic design, nor it was a part of critiquing white identity. These findings indicate that in the teachers’ and instructor’s interpretations, the teachers progressed from the initial contact stage defined by Helms (1990) through the stage of disintegration and onto the reintegration and pseudo-independent stages. Therefore, the teachers were able to critically work through their colorblind views of their students and parents and to begin to see the need to resituate their understanding of race. The key to critical autoethnographic work is the positioning of the autoethnographer as the sole authority. Bringing CWS in as a primary tool of data analysis also moves autoethnography into self-critique, which is key to the understanding of white privilege. All of the teachers’ data illustrated their realizations that as whites, they do possess a racial identity that is privileged. Both of the teachers expressed a desire to address their racial positioning in their own teaching. CASS provides a clear context for white critique. Rather than examining racial identity conceptually exclusively through course readings, materials, and activities, data analysis relies on the critical interpretation of everyday events in order to learn how to ‘review’ them through a critical racial lens. White teachers are in privileged positions that do not require racial examination; CASS takes daily events teachers are familiar with and allows them to apply CWS theory over a long period of time. As Erica stated, ‘The summer was so intense ... sometimes when you go through something that intense you almost just want to shut it out and not process it ... but you need to have processing time.’ Bringing whiteness into CASS provokes examination of the often underlying events related to race and makes them accountable in the minutiae of daily life while realizing the social implications for those understandings, as evidenced in the

closing statements made by Victoria: ‘Unfortunately, there will always be those who deny that racism exists, and a growing population of diverse citizens who will suffer at the hands of a dominant society that sometimes doesn’t even realize the harm they are causing’ and Hayden: ‘My students should have equal access to a high academic education and college graduate programs that white middle and upper class students are assumed an immediate right to. The reality is that they do not.’

Understanding autoethnographic methods and critical analysis: positioning and supporting teachers as critical researchers of their own lives

CASS methodology is founded on taking a particular standpoint in order to critically examine one’s daily life in particular contexts. Using CASS can assist white teachers by providing a safe yet critical mode to self-evaluate a delicate topic such as race. From a teacher educator perspective this repositions the teachers as the primary critics of their actions and attitudes while letting them guide their own learning and assist each other along the way. In many ways the crucial component of CASS is the positioning of the researcher by placing the critical examination of race directly in the hands of the white teachers themselves and allowing them to control their own data analysis and representation. Moving beyond the white confessional tale as a vehicle to recenter the white experience in realizing white privilege and assuaging white guilt, critical long-term autoethnographic study requires teachers to use data they collect in their own school settings and provides opportunities for the critical reinterpretation of daily teaching events. With the goal of critically analyzing race-based teaching, positioning is to alter the daily instructional practices of white teachers from a CWS perspective that the teachers determine themselves. By taking a critical stance on whiteness and privilege, the teachers were allowed to frame their own experiences both theoretically and practically rather than being evaluated on their racial understanding; the teachers were graded on the completion of their study complete with a research question, data, analysis and a theoretical frame, and conclusions.

Supporting teachers throughout the research process was crucial. As Hayden explained:

I think it’s been the variety of activities that helped ... sometimes we talked to each other, sometimes we talked to people at school, we noticed things that maybe we wouldn’t have noticed before, and we talked to each other about it. We’ve talked informally, formally, we’ve read papers, done reflections.

The class meetings served to analyze their construction of events in racial ways. Many meetings were full of laughter, tears, and questions about their writing. For example, Hayden’s avoidance of race in her analysis of Shay was addressed by the other teachers, who saw the event as racial and posed questions for Hayden to think about, a common mode of discussion throughout the yearlong course experiences. Within a supportive yet critical community of other teachers working through the same ideas, teachers can begin to rely on each other and the instructor as they explore their racial identity in critical ways. At the end of the course, Author 2 asked the teachers to reflect on their work in the class with Author 1. Instructor participation and modeling were often mentioned by the teachers, Carrie stated:

The biggest thing for me was when Author 1 brought in her paper about dealing with her racism from 11 years ago ... that was probably the most powerful ... as far as writing

my paper because I have the personal connection with her ... and if she can get away with it then maybe I can get away with it too.

While time was a factor as well, Victoria stated:

How did we get here? I think part of what helped me a lot is just the amount of time ... I would not be in this place if this was just a semester class ... We've had so much time to process things, and we've been given that chance to sit back and just reflect on what's going on inside of ourselves – to look outside things ... and then to change some of the beliefs that I had personally and really take a hard look at those.

The limitations of this study related to the time allotment and the commitment of the teachers are significant. Teachers who volunteered for the three courses for an entire year were extremely dedicated and devoted to the course of study and were willing to take emotional risks and support each other while they shared their sometimes difficult confessional tales of understanding their white identity and privilege. Two years after the first course meeting and one year after their autoethnographies were completed, Hayden and Victoria stood in front of a new class of 20 white in-service teachers and shared their papers. They stopped now and then to elaborate on their ideas, but there were no more apologies and no hesitations. They talked about the size and shape of their white color on the walls of their classrooms as the other teachers sat pressed into their silence.

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