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Facilitating Critical Social Justice Dialogue About Race: The Lived Experience of White Female Teacher Educators

By

Natalie Hagler

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Chair: Nancy Fichtman Dana
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

Given the increasing diversity of the K-12 student population and homogenization of a White, female teaching force that creates cultural disconnections between students and teachers, a growing number of teacher education programs are placing a laser-like focus on their teacher candidates’ development of critical social justice literacy. However, the teacher educators who work within these programs are also predominately White and female, leading many to question the ways White female teacher educators can effectively cultivate the critical social justice literacy of the teacher candidates with whom they work. While the body of research about the teaching of critical social justice to teacher candidates continues to grow, few studies have focused specifically on how White female teacher educators enact critical dialogue about race. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand the ways three White teacher educators made sense of their experiences in facilitating critical dialogues about race designed to challenge teacher candidates to unearth and examine their beliefs about race in education.

Following Seidman’s (2013) model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing, data collection for this study included three 90-minute semi-structured interviews with three White teacher educators identified as experienced facilitators who were committed to social justice and
racial equity. In this dissertation, the participants’ stories of facilitating critical social justice dialogues about race (CSJD-R) are presented in narrative profiles constructed using the participants’ own words. An analysis of the narrative profiles revealed three components of their CSJD-R facilitation practice: (1) Planning, (2) Enacting and Reacting, and (3) Reading the Self. This study reports the teacher educator practices that comprise each component by both describing and critically analyzing the concrete strategies employed by these teacher educators during CSJD-R facilitation.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Effective classroom practice requires teachers to understand students’ social, emotional, and cognitive needs (Brown, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). However, the increasing diversity of the K-12 student population and homogenization of a White, female teaching force (Cho & de Castro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Gay, 1997; Sleeter, 2001) creates cultural disconnections between students and teachers when teachers have inadequate preparation to engage students in culturally appropriate and responsive ways (Bergeron, 2008; Bryant, Moss, & Zidjemas-Boudreau, 2015; Cooper, 2007; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Ukpokodu, 2011). A 2015-2016 national demographic survey of teachers revealed that 77% of the teaching workforce is female and about 80% is non-Hispanic White (Taie & Goldring, 2018). This pattern is mirrored in the demographics of teacher educators—those who prepare teachers. In professional education programs, 78% of full-time faculty are White, and the number of female teacher educators continues to increase (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010). In a system dominated by White teachers and teacher educators with limited knowledge and personal experiences with marginalized students, subject matter preparation alone cannot adequately prepare teacher candidates to meet the needs of a growing racially diverse student population (Banks, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

Teaching grounded in diversity and equity is, in its broadest sense, an “attempt to create learning experiences that enable students to pursue academic excellence without abandoning their integrity” (Howard, 2001, p. 136). Hayes and Juárez (2012) asserted that although many teacher preparation programs boast of racially and culturally inclusive and democratic histories, their practices, syllabi, and curricula reflect color-blind frameworks that perpetuate racism,
sabotage pedagogies that support the effective teaching of diverse populations, and silence traditionally marginalized students and teachers. If teacher educators are going to be able to prepare teachers to effectively teach racially diverse student populations, they must engage teacher candidates in opportunities to develop anti-oppressive social justice values in tandem with developing their “ability to recognize their own world views, to understand and embrace cultural diversity in their students, and to confront their potential biases and assumptions in their interactions with diverse students and their families” (He, 2013, p.2).

The preparation of teacher candidates to “place diversity front and center” (Nieto, 2000, p. 180), which can help reduce the opportunity, achievement, and discipline gaps between White students and students of color, is well-represented in the research literature (Ambe, 2006; Gay, 2010; Gorski, 2016; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Research that examines the design of teacher education programs and outlines best practices to meet the needs of a racially diverse student population includes immersive field experiences, infusing critical and culturally responsive pedagogies across the curriculum, scaffolding reflective practices for teacher candidates, and engaging in classroom discourse (Barnes, 2006; Farmer, Hauk, & Neumann, 2005; Salend, Whittaker, Duhaney, and Smith, 2003; Seidl, 2007; Townsend, 2002; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

Despite more than three decades of research examining how teacher candidates are prepared to create equitable learning environments, many educators continue to engage in empty, ill-informed practices with their “eyes wide shut” (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012, p. 2). One reason for this disconnect between research and practice is that universities and colleges are structured to support the privileging of Whiteness with a “collectively held racial epistemology” (Hayes & Juárez, 2012, p. 6). Rather than aligning the curriculum with the truth of a pluralistic
society, teacher educators perpetuate the status quo by tacking on courses in diversity, multicultural education, and differentiated instruction as separate foundations to education courses (Ambe, 2006; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Several factors contribute to the absence of critical social justice pedagogies and practices in teacher education programs. In a national study that included survey data from elementary and secondary teacher education program coordinators and department chairs in over 142 public universities, Jennings (2007) found that the time needed to address race and social justice in addition to perceived priorities in an already overloaded curriculum was reported as the greatest challenge to implementation at the program level. Second to time constraints as a challenge to implementing critical social justice pedagogies was faculty discomfort concerning conversations about race, equity, diversity, and social justice (Ambe, 2006; Prater & Deveraux, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2011). One reason teacher educators may struggle when engaging in dialogue about race with students is that, though the teacher educator may espouse a belief in critical social justice pedagogies, there can be a disconnect between their belief and practice (Allen & Herman-Wilmath, 2006). For example, emancipatory pedagogies require the willingness of teacher educators to engage with students in “dialogue that values social interaction, collaboration, authentic democracy, and self-actualization for making fundamental changes both individually and socially” as part of a curriculum negotiated by the students and the teacher (Nouri & Sajjaid, 2014, p.76). This practice disrupts traditional institutional norms that position the teacher as the expert in class dialogue that is designed to reflect or conform to program goals, the program or teacher educator’s ideologies about race and equity, or other predetermined criteria (Hoffman, Kipp, Artiles, & Lopez-Torres, 2003).
In addition to being unprepared to challenge institutional norms, teacher educators might be resistant to infusing critical social justice pedagogies in teacher preparation courses simply because they want to avoid racial confrontations (Gay, 2005) or don’t want to risk receiving negative teacher evaluations (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999). By avoiding the difficult conversations, teacher educators are unintentionally complicit in sustaining the conditions that reinforce systemic oppression in schools (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

There is a growing body of literature in which teacher educators examine either individually or collectively the tensions they experience as they work to enact critical racial dialogue (Cutri & Whiting, 2014; DePalma, 2008; Jones, 2016; Laman, Jewett, Jennings, Wilson, & Souto-Manning, 2012). Within the literature on teacher education, the words discussion, dialogue, and conversation are often used interchangeably to describe classroom interactions. However, the meaning and nature of these terms imply very different purposes for the interaction. While the term discussion refers to a problem-solving or decision-making process through which participants reach a consensus, the purpose of a dialogue or conversation is to “make possible a flow of meaning…out of which may emerge some new understanding…which may not have been in the starting point at all” (Bohm, 2013, p. 7). In conversations about race, dialogue is a tool for teacher change that can support teacher candidates and teacher educators as they “access and alter the subjective substratum… [of] beliefs, emotions, personal theories, identity, and personal practical knowledge” that shapes their teaching practice (Penlington, 2008, p. 1305). Wheatley (2002) explained that the path to change lies in the confusion created by dissolving “cherished interpretations” to make way for the new (p. 34).
Unfortunately, in practice, teacher educators often miss opportunities to recognize and confront practices in facilitating dialogue that do not align with critical social justice pedagogies, such as enacting monologic approaches tied to the teacher’s goals. This practice of engaging in a goal-driven discussion designed to promote the teacher’s agenda ignores the students’ agency in their learning (Abd Elkader, 2016). The learning goals of dialogue should be driven by the students as subjects of the dialogue, rather than the objects (Shor and Freire, 1987). In order to better prepare teacher candidates to engage in dialogue about what Glazier (2003) calls “hot lava” topics, such as race, it is critical that teacher educators be willing to challenge traditional hierarchical roles of power in the classroom that situate the instructor as the expert (p. 76). By doing this, teacher educators confront their personal experiences and assumptions about these issues in tandem with their students.

While 30 years of literature paints a dismal picture of programs aimed at preparing teachers to create equitable learning environments, there is some evidence that individual teacher educators are making a difference with the pedagogy they use. The facilitation, or mediation, of critical dialogue is one common strategy that teacher educators employ to support teacher candidates in unearthing their histories, experiences, and assumptions about race, racial equity, and social justice. Critical dialogue “identifies, challenges, and reframes status quo discourses that can then be acted upon in new ways that challenge oppression and open opportunities for transformation” (Jennings, Jewett, Laman, Souto-Manning, and Wilson, 2010, p. 199). It is a process by which participants acknowledge these various perspectives to “reconstruct their understandings in more complex ways and construct new ways of being and understanding the world” (Laman et al., 2012, p.199). Through critical dialogue, participants share their stories, revealing within the narrative their perspectives as they have been and continue to be constructed
and informed by their “social, cultural, and lived experiences” (Laman et al., 2012, p. 199).

Teacher educators can begin to uncover existing racial assumptions and biases in themselves and in their students by intentionally enacting a critical dialogue (Boyd & Glaizer, 2017; Jackson, 2008).

To make the invisible in teacher educator practice visible, it is important to pull back the curtain on the way White teacher educators conceptualize and enact critical dialogue about race. However, the literature on the pedagogy of critical dialogue offers very little insight into teacher educators’ backgrounds, experiences, and racial identity formation (Assaf, Graza, & Battle, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Stenhouse, 2012; Tattoo, 1996; Taylor, 1999) or their pedagogical and epistemological beliefs (Cutri & Whiting, 2015; Grundy & Hatton, 1995) that inform their practice. For example, studies focused on adult and higher education highlight strategies for the planning (Quaye, 2012) or facilitation of (Gayles, Kelly, Grays, Zhang, & Porter, 2015; Murray-Johnson, Ross-Gordon, 2018; Quaye, 2014) critical dialogue on race or the strategies used to navigate the emotional tensions instructors face during facilitation (Murray-Johnson & Ross-Gordon, 2018), but the studies do not explicitly connect these strategies to the preparation of teacher candidates to enact critical social justices practices.

Furthermore, current literature does not highlight connections between White teacher educators’ racial identity development to how they make sense of their facilitation—a significant scholarly gap given the prevalence of White teacher educators in teacher preparation programs. Therefore, further research is needed to capture teacher educators’ experiences of facilitating critical dialogue with their students and the meaning it has for their work in preparing teacher candidates to “incorporate the multiplicities of identities and cultures” in ways that would not
only embrace but restore and revitalize the cultures of historically marginalized students” (Paris, 2012, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 81).

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to capture the ways teacher educators make sense of their experiences in facilitating critical racial dialogue designed to lead teacher candidates into a what Glazier (2003) calls a “hot lava” topic - race. As such, this study explored how three White teacher educators grapple with facilitating discussions that challenge teacher candidates to unearth and examine their beliefs about racial equity in education by asking the following research questions: (1) How do teacher educators plan for, facilitate, and reflect upon critical dialogue about race, racial equity, and social justice?; (2) How do they adjust their facilitation to support the development of teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?; and (3) What do they perceive as challenges both within and beyond their classrooms in facilitating these dialogues with their students?

**Research Design**

To gain insight into these questions, I employed qualitative research methodology to examine the individual experiences of teacher educators. This basic qualitative study drew on a phenomenological perspective. To capture the experiences of the participants as shared in their own words, I adopted the method of in-depth phenomenological interviewing based on Seidman’s (2013) model to gain the perspectives of teacher educators as they reflected on and described their experiences facilitating critical racial dialogue within the context of their personal histories. Data collection for this study adhered to Seidman’s (2013) model and included semi-structured interviews designed to explore the lived experiences of teacher educators who facilitate critical dialogue with teacher candidates enrolled in their classes or seminars. I conducted three approximately 90-minute interviews with each of the participants over a one-
month period. The first interview was a focused life history, which put the participants’ experience as a teacher educator in context and situated it in a range of previous experiences. The second interview concentrated on the participants’ reconstruction of their experience facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates. Finally, the third interview asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience by connecting the intellectual and emotional aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Because the purpose of interviewing is to capture the consciousness of the participants through their utterances, I recorded the interviews to remain as true as possible to each word the participants spoke (Vygotsky, 1987). I then hired a transcription service to transcribe the interviews verbatim, including all utterances. To maintain the focus of each interview, I prepared an interview guide that included open-ended prompts (Appendix B), although wording and order were flexible in order to best navigate each participant’s experiences (Merriam, 1998). The data analysis process included the construction of narrative profiles for each teacher educator and the identification of themes that emerged across the data.

**Significance of the Study**

Current literature on critical social justice literacy in teacher education outlines program models and teaching strategies that develop teacher candidates’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes to meet the needs of a racially diverse student population. However, the achievement gap in K-12 schools between White, middle-class students and students of color continues to grow. While knowledge about adult learning and the teaching of critical social justice to teacher candidates is central to understanding the development of teachers’ knowledge, skill, and attitudes to close this gap, additional studies on how teacher educators think about enacting their role would complement what is known about the pedagogy of critical dialogue. Research that studied the strategy of engaging teacher candidates in critical racial dialogue has had mixed results regarding
the impact it has had on transforming the beliefs and practices of teacher candidates (Aba Elkarer, 2016). This study adds to the current literature on the facilitation of critical dialogue about race issues by investigating how White teacher educators make meaning of their practice. What happens as teacher educators plan for, enact, and react to their practice is not always visible to other teacher educators; however, because we are committed to improving our practice, we need to make the invisible visible by capturing the essence of teacher educators’ experiences of their practice. Therefore, this study serves as a model for other teacher educators to operationalize a pedagogy of critical racial dialogue.

Overview of the Dissertation

This chapter provided a brief overview of this study. In Chapter 2, I will review the current literature related to teacher education for critical social justice literacy and a pedagogy of critical dialogue. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, methods, and design I employed to better understand how three teacher educators made sense of their experience with the facilitation of critical dialogue around issues of race. In Chapter 4, I present the participants’ narrative profiles in their own words to reveal their perception of their facilitation practice. Chapter 5 reveals the dominant themes that occurred across participants, names the essence of their pedagogy distilled from their commonalities, and includes the structural description of the experiences shared by all three teacher educators. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a discussion of the implications of this research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how teacher educators make sense of their experiences facilitating critical dialogue around issues of race in order to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy. In order to understand the experiences of these teacher educators, it is important to provide a background of the current landscape of K-12 teacher preparation. To situate this study in that landscape, I begin this chapter with a review of the current literature on teacher preparation focused on developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach in a racially diverse society. Next, I offer a definition of the terms “critical social justice” and “critical social justice literacy” as understood in this study followed by a synthesis of the current literature on a pedagogy of critical dialogue focused specifically on developing teacher candidate knowledge about race as a dimension of critical social justice literacy. I then conclude the review of literature with a presentation of the current empirical research practices to provide insight into how teacher educators grapple with the facilitation of critical dialogue as one strategy to develop critical social justice literacy in teacher candidates.

Teacher Education for Racial Equity and Social Justice

Although it is currently commonplace for teacher preparation programs in the United States to claim that racial equity and social justice are at the center of their curriculum and practice, teachers continue to struggle to meet the needs of students of color in their PK-12 classrooms (Ukpokodu, 2011). The current literature asserts that in order to prepare teachers to meet the needs of racially diverse student populations, teacher education programs must provide opportunities for teacher candidates to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to unearth and examine their assumptions about teaching racially diverse populations, critically reflect on
their sociocultural histories, and examine institutional structures that perpetuate the systemic oppression and marginalization of underserved populations (Ambe, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay, 2002; Juarez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

As previously mentioned, we have seen a significant contribution to the literature on teacher preparation programs designed to prepare teacher candidates to work in a racially diverse society. Multiple scholars have outlined essential components to meet this need, which include elements across the teacher education program, coursework, and field experience. These elements work in tandem with one another; in other words, they are ineffective as isolated components of a program (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010; LeRoux & Mdunge, 2012). The first and most important element is that the entire program shares a “drive to place [equity and] social justice at the center, either through the curricular or pedagogical focus” (Mills, 2008, p. 274), and that issues of race, racial equity, and social justice are embedded within the entire program from entrance to graduation (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010). Second, within their courses or field experiences, candidates should experience opportunities for collaborative learning, whether between themselves, between candidates and teacher educators (Fults & Harry, 2012; Johnson-Lachuck & Mosely, 2012; Olson & Craig, 2012), or between themselves and community members, their students, or mentor teachers (Delano-Oriana, 2012; Fitchett, Starker, & Salyers, 2012). Thirdly, field placements, or service learning, should include approaches to learning that provide experiences with racially diverse populations combined with reflective tasks (Howard, 2003; McDonald, 2005, 2008). Additionally, teacher candidates must engage in critical dialogue that interrogates their privilege, cultural assumptions, beliefs about race and equity, histories, and lived-experiences, and that emphasizes the nature of their experience and examines any dissonance that may arise (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Singleton, 2015). The foundation of cultural
competence and critical consciousness in education is grounded in the seminal works of Freire (1970), Gay (2002), and Lasdon-Billings (1995) and provides an overarching framework for preparing teacher candidates to enact a critical social justice practice.

**Cultural Competence in Teacher Education**

Teaching focused on racial equity and social justice must provide educational experiences that cultivate students’ cultural competence. Cultural competence in education can be defined as a “teacher’s ability to recognize their own world views, to understand and embrace the cultural diversity of their students, and to confront their potential biases and assumptions in their interactions with diverse students and their families” (He, 2013, p.2). Ladson-Billings (2006) described cultural competence as “helping students recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to a wider culture where they are more likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the life they choose to lead” (p. 36). A teacher’s cultural competence is developed over time and through an ongoing effort to better understand the histories and cultures of their diverse student populations (Ladson-Billing, 1995, 1996; Larson & Bradshaw, 2017).

In a review of the literature on cultural competence, Larson and Bradshaw (2017) outlined the definitions of cultural competence in 15 studies. Across these studies, eight descriptors of teachers who demonstrated cultural competence were consistent within their definitions: 1) culturally sensitive; 2) use culturally relevant teaching methods; 3) address discriminatory practices; 4) incorporate views and histories of marginalized people into the curriculum; 5) set high expectations; 6) use metacognitive strategies; 7) understand critical literacy; and 8) connect lessons with students’ cultures. For example, to create a learning environment that invites all students to engage in the learning community, teachers and teacher educators must utilize cultural referents as vehicles for learning to draw on students’ lived
experiences as assets rather than deficits (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999; Harmon, 2012). This approach establishes an inclusive environment that fosters and sustains cultural competence for students and teachers (Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Opportunities to engage in classroom dialogue and communication must also reflect variations in discourse styles that pull students’ voices and stories in rather than push them out. Traditionally, classroom discourse centers around the teacher in what Kochman (1995 as cited in Gay, 2010) called a “passive-receptive posture.” This style of discourse silences students in some ethnic groups, specifically, African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Hawaiians, by using rules of participation that discourage non-linear interactions consistent with communication styles that are “participatory-interactive” (Gay, 2010). Education focused on racial equity and social justice demands that teachers include discourse styles such as call-and-response, storytelling, and rapport-talk that create an inclusive, interactive, empowering school culture so all students can take an active role in the dialogue.

However, reducing cultural competence to a list of skills or strategies to be checked-off can be problematic in teacher education. To begin with, cultural competence can never be fully achieved if we embrace the notion that human history and experience are always changing. If we are to assume that a knowledge of students’ cultures implies that there is one history for Hispanic culture, then we run the risk of reducing all students with a Hispanic background to a list of specific cultural norms and stereotypes that essentialize these students. Cultural competence as an isolated skill-set does not go far enough to ignite the sociocultural and sociopolitical fires necessary to create individual and institutional change. Additionally, awareness of one’s cultural beliefs or values is not enough to confront or disrupt racist practices and implicit biases. In order to affect change, teachers and teacher educators must also prepare students for critical
consciousness, which helps them “…recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476).

**Critical Consciousness in Teacher Education**

Empowering teacher candidates to develop academic competence and agency requires teacher educators to create a classroom environment where students can engage critically with the world and others. Teachers who embody critical consciousness “observe the problems within reality, examine all potential causes of these problems within the historical and social context, explore possible responses, and then select the most reasonable of those possible responses for action” (Bradley-Levine, 2012, p. 754). Critical consciousness is a fluid and ongoing process of learning about and developing a profound understanding of the political and social contradictions in the world (Freire, 1970).

Freire (1970) posits that the thinking subject exists in an interconnected relationship to others in the world. Individuals do not live in isolation but are connected through shared, collective lived experience. Therefore, critically conscious teachers create intentional experiences that support the development of students’ conscientization, that is, “the organic formation of an intimate relationship between consciousness, human interaction and the world we seek to reinvent” (Freire, 1983 as cited in Darder, 2015).

Critical Consciousness demands that individuals engage in holistic and critical thinking about their circumstances in order to cultivate “the highest development of thought and action” (Leonard & McLaren, 2002, p. 31). As underscored by Leonard and McLaren (2002),

Freire refers to this group’s thought as critical transitivity to suggest the dynamism between critical thought and critical action. Here, the individual sees herself or himself making the changes needed. A critically transitive thinker feels empowered to think and to act on the conditions around her or him, and relates those conditions to the larger contexts of power in society. (p. 31)
Critically conscious teachers have an awareness of cultural issues affecting students, recognize disproportionate historical, political, economic, and legal structures that marginalize groups, examine the impact of privilege on their practice, and develop an awareness of and reflect on their own cultural perspective (Bradley-Levine, 2012; Dantas-Whitney & Waldschmidt, 2009; Gay, 2002; Jacobs, Casciola, Arndt, & Mallory, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Robinson, 2017; Willey & Magee, 2016), and then strike a balance between action and reflection (hooks, 2014).

Humans develop critical consciousness “through individual reflection which modifies our attitudes of personal responsibility allowing us to comprehend how our choices affect the social reality” (Bradley-Levine, 2012, p.754). However, individual reflection must be supplemented with dialogue through the sharing of counter-stories and personal experience. It is dialogue that helps us make sense of and acknowledge oppressive social structures (such as individual privilege) and construct a common humanity (Freire, 1970).

To foster inclusive educational practices that acknowledge and honor racial diversity, strategies for teacher preparation must reach beyond developing the skills and dispositions of teachers who embody cultural competence and critical consciousness. Hence, it is necessary to understand the current literature that examines the pedagogy of critical social justice literacy.

**Critical Social Justice Literacy in Teacher Education**

Adopting social justice principles in teacher preparation programs to infuse culturally pluralistic perspectives and concepts expands the conversation beyond teaching individual toleration of diversity and toward institutional transformation (Gay, 2005, 2007; Jennings, 2007). Social justice, as defined by Nieto (2009), is:

…a philosophy, an approach, and actions that treat all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity. On a societal scale, this means affording each person the real – not simply a verbalized – opportunity to reach their potential by giving them access to the goods, services, and social and cultural capital of a society, while also affirming the culture and talent of each individual and the
group or groups with which they identify (so long as such groups are willing to live peacefully and respectfully with others). (p.23)

In elaborating on the principles of social justice, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2015) emphasized the importance of persistently fostering a critical self-awareness of power and privilege within the broader societal hierarchy. They argued that when teachers and teacher educators understand that stratification is “deeply embedded in the fabric of society” (p. xx) in ways that significantly privilege some at the expense of others, they will be more likely and able to actively affect social change. Individuals must consistently examine their sociocultural position in order to cultivate a broad worldview of the hegemonic systems and structures and to understand their role in reproducing or reforming them. To develop these abilities, they proposed a pedagogy of critical social justice that includes the following four key elements: (a) Recognize how relations of unequal power are constantly being negotiated at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels; (b) Understand our own positions within these relations of unequal power; (c) Think critically about knowledge; and (d) Act on the above in service of a more just society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015, p. xxi).

Critical social justice literacy is “the blend of an understanding of critical social justice and the active engagement in a critical social justice practice” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015, p. xxi). Bondy, Hambacher, Murphy, Wolkenhauer, and Krell (2015) addressed the relationship between understanding and action in their definition of critical social justice praxis as “a blend of critical, personal, and sociological analysis and action to achieve a more socially just society” (p.228). Although the definition of critical social justice encompasses sweeping concepts of diversity, including race, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality, for the purpose of this dissertation I focused specifically on developing teacher candidate knowledge about race as a dimension of critical social justice literacy. Therefore, I focused on the writings of Banks
and Sleeter (1996, 2010) to further define critical social justice literacy as it is used within the context of the current study. I have chosen these scholars because they focused on equity and the need to disrupt racist educational practices. Collectively, these scholars write about four elements of critical social justice literacy: power, positionality, critical framing of knowledge, and agents of social justice.

**Power**

In order to disrupt systemic racism and the current inequities that plague our classrooms, teachers and teacher educators must prepare students to “…recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 476). Teacher candidates who embody critical social justice literacy understand the fluidity of institutionalized power relationships between and among social groups. They view education through the lens of social groups rather than individualism in order to “recognize the patterns of structural injustice” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015, p. 147). Critical social justice literacy requires that teachers recognize that power relations, for example, around racial identity, are shaped by “one’s positioning in the wider society” (May & Sleeter, 2010, p.5) and are not necessarily a product of choice or options. However, as Gorski (2016) warned, emphasizing group identity runs the risk of “stereotyping through erroneous essentialist conceptions of who students are” (p. 223). Therefore, teacher candidates’ critical thinking about groups should not preclude their acknowledgment of group members as individuals with unique lived-experiences.

Because inequities occur within a larger socio-political context, Ladson-Billings (2000) argued that students and teachers must participate together in the “collective struggle” to understand that “social structures and practices help reproduce inequities” (p.210). Kincheloe (2011) asserted that all curricula “bear the imprint of power” (p.249), and therefore, social justice
educators “interject a literacy of power” (p.235) into their curriculum to help students understand how power is institutionalized.

**Positionality**

Critical examination of positionality, or “how [one’s] identities and assumptions about [one’s] students and their families are related to how they have been and are socially situated” (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 42), is a key dimension of critical social justice literacy. Because education does not “occur in a vacuum” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 210), critical social justice educators must examine the “social locations from which they speak” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014, p.4) in order to understand how history, social and political narratives, language, and other cultural forces have shaped their lives and their identities. Kincheloe (2011) asserted that critical educators “bring these norms, these ethical and moral assumptions, these visions to the light of day so they can be analyzed and discussed” (p. 234).

**Critical Framing of Knowledge**

In addition to confronting their positionality in relation to social, political, and historical dynamics, teachers who embody critical social justice literacy demonstrate a critical stance and believe “knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed” and “must be viewed critically…” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 481). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2015) determined that knowledge is never neutral, but rather “socially constructed” and as such “is reflective of the values and interests of those who produce it” (p. 7). When teacher candidates understand that they “hold power to produce their own knowledges,” they are armed to subvert the “top-down tyranny of expert-produced interpretations of tradition” (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 206) and challenge the valuing of technical over emancipatory knowledge (Habermas, 1984). Through that lens, teachers must develop knowledge about racial and ethnic groups from historical and contemporary perspectives (Banks, 2013) and develop cultural competence (Ladson-Billings,
1995a) to specifically address the needs of racially diverse students. The intersection of one’s positionality, dynamics of power, and the critical examination of knowledge is fundamental to critical social justice practice.

**Agent for Social Justice**

Banks (2013) described teachers as agents of change who “promote democratic values and the empowerment of students” (p.191). For example, critical social justice teachers critically examine what Banks (2013) called the “mainstream-centric” curriculum, which alienates students of color, and then take action to integrate multicultural content by adopting a multilevel, blended curriculum approach (p. 181). In addition, two of the skills Gorski (2016) ascribed to teachers who embody what he called equity literacy are “the ability to redress inequity in the long term, such as by effectively and equitably attending to the deeper cultural dynamics of the institution” and “the ability to sustain equity efforts—even in the face of resistance (p. 225).

As previously described, critical consciousness is an element of critical social justice literacy in which individuals demonstrate holistic and critical thinking about the human experience in order to address social inequity through an iterative process of engaging in knowing, action, and reflection (Freire, 1970). Teachers who embody critical consciousness have an awareness of cultural issues affecting students, recognize disproportionate historical, political, economic, and legal structures that marginalize groups, examine the impact of privilege on their practice, develop an awareness of and reflect on their own cultural perspective (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), and strike a balance between reflection and action (hooks, 2014). It is through praxis, the relationship between critical thought and critical action, that critical social justice teachers disrupt inequitable practices. Furthermore, it is dialogue that helps us make sense of and acknowledge oppressive social structures (such as individual privilege) and construct “a common humanity” (Freire, 1970). Hence, it is necessary to understand the types of discourse
teacher educators employ in their classrooms and the current literature that examines the pedagogy of dialogue in teacher education.

**Pedagogy of Dialogue**

Dialogue is considered central to the ways individuals make sense of the world and create new knowledge. At the foreground of Western views of education since Plato’s narrative depiction in “Meno,” the traditions of dialogue have mirrored dominant themes in educators’ epistemological perspectives. The type of discourse teacher educators employ in their classrooms reflect their beliefs about or ideological stance on discourse (O’Connor & Michaels, 2007; Hermans-Nymark, 2009; Singelton, 2015). Some views of dialogue value the teacher as the repository of knowledge whose role it is to impart their wisdom on their students or lead them to discovering the correct information or insights that the teacher has already anticipated, such as the initiate-response-evaluation pattern (Mehan, 1979). Others have stressed debate as a way of challenging and supporting opinions (Amobi, 2007). More recently, others have included discourse as a way for individuals to construct knowledge together (Bryant & Moss, 2017; Chavez-Reyes, 2012; DePalma, 2008).

**Monologic Discourse**

Monologic discourse is dialogue in which the teacher initiates most of the questions. It assumes that the student will realize they already know the correct answer from prior learning. In this type of discourse, the teacher intentionally engages the students through questioning or guides the students to “discover” the information. In education, teacher/student dialogue has traditionally reflected a pattern that positions the teacher as an all-knowing individual who either transmits or leads the ignorant learner to a preconceived and universal truth (Burbles & Bruce, 2001). Mehan (1979) coined this type of interaction the IRE (initiate, response, evaluate) pattern because the teacher initiates the dialogue, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that
response. This approach ignores the students’ agency in their learning because it reinforces the truth as held by the establishment.

Bakhtin (1981) asserted that discourses in which authority is “organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher” (p. 324) lack transformative potential. Even when teachers and teacher educators claim to be engaging students in dialogue they think is egalitarian or politically empowering, they may be practicing monologic dialogue (Matusov, 2009) if they are leading students to pre-formed conclusions. In the current standards-driven educational environment, including teacher education, the push to adopt “best-practices” or particular ideologies about race, diversity, and social justice, “inevitably de-politicizes and de-histories the construction of teacher identities by removing professional learning from the arena of power and the struggle over meaning” (Docke et al., 2004, p. 31).

**Dialogic Discourse**

Quite the opposite from the restraints of monologic discourse, dialogic discourse is a dynamic strategy for meaning-making that requires neither agreement nor a shared desire to solve an underlying problem, but rather provides an opportunity for people to reflect together and transform their thinking. It is defined as “a sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that structure everyday experience” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 2). With its roots in the Greek words dia and logos, the word “dialogue” intimates “meaning flowing through.” In this sense, dialogic discourse is a fundamental element of a teacher preparation program that aims to navigate the “tension-filled environment between alien words [and] value judgments” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276).

Bakhtin (1981) proposed that the language we use in dialogue with one another and with ourselves is influenced by the "socio-ideological consciousness" (p. 276). Words do not exist as separate decontextualized utterances from the context in which they are spoken, the histories of
the people who both speak and hear them, or the value judgments made as both speaker and listener interpret and make meaning within the dialogue. Rather, they are a relationship among people, texts, activities, and situations that collide as individuals make meaning (Burbles & Bruce, 2004; Cadzen et al., 1996; Foucault, 1972; Gee, 1990) as part of their role in various communities of practice (Wenger, 1993). Dialogic discourse honors the students’ agency in their own learning because it reinforces the truth as a relative social construction that derives from one’s interaction with the world around them. As teacher education programs have evolved from a one-time process of training for “best-practices” to preparation programs driven by social constructivist ideals, dialogic discourse has emerged as a regular practice intended to prepare teacher candidates for a more socially just practice. Dialogic discourse is the foundation of pedagogy of critical dialogue.

**Critical Dialogue to Develop Critical Social Justice Literacy**

Much of the research on dialogue as a strategy to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for critical social justice literacy in teacher candidates has been limited to providing a rationale for teacher educators to employ a pedagogy of critical dialogue to shift teacher candidates’ beliefs about diverse populations. As recent research has highlighted the ineffectiveness of stand-alone courses in diversity or multicultural education (Ambe, 2006), researchers have also sought to develop the relationship between course or field experience design elements working in tandem with dialogue. Further research highlights the importance of the facilitator in the effectiveness of critical dialogue (DePalma, 2007; Laman et al., 2012).

As part of a larger study of 35 female students, Abd Elkader (2016) focused on two case studies to explore the following research questions: “In an educational institution where students are required to take courses to fulfill the multicultural requirement, how does students’ subjectivity guide or hinder learning, and how do the students respond to the dialogue on the
controversial issues of the curriculum? What learning opportunities, if any, did dialogic pedagogy present for the students in this class?” (p. 1) Abd Elkader argued that ignoring dialogic pedagogy when engaging students in critical dialogue actually “muffles or stifles students’ voices” and impedes rather than supports student agency for the “the sake of attaining predefined curricular objectives” (p. 1). The context of the study was a predominantly White research institution on the East Coast. Participants in the study were students in a core course for all education students that was designed to examine classroom teachers’ responsibilities toward diversity. The course was intentionally designed to create an environment for dialogic pedagogy. As part of the course design, there were no tests or exams and no assignments were graded except for the final project. Optional Exit notes were collected at the end of each class to provide all students with an opportunity to participate in class dialogue, and students were expected to contribute two online discussion posts per week, with topics initiated by the students. As a participant observer, Abd Elkader employed critical ethnographic data collection methods that included detailed field notes collected during the field events and in-depth interviewing after the conclusion of the course. Students’ written work and online discussion posts were also included in the data analysis.

The theoretical framework included dialogic pedagogy and critical multicultural education. Central to Abd Elkader’s study was Bakhtin’s (1981) notion that a minimum of two representations of consciousness must engage in dialogue for an idea to be born. In classrooms driven by institutional learning goals, traditional dialogues are inherently monologic rather than dialogic because they serve a universal conceptualization of truth as defined by the curriculum. Authentic learning can only take place when teachers relinquish control of the learning goals to the students and “considers students as subjects who have equal voices to that of the teacher and
the curriculum” (Abd Elkader, 2016, p. 3). The rejection of universal truth in dialogic pedagogy aligns with the principles of critical multicultural education to examine and challenge institutional traditions of racism and the privileging of Whiteness.

Findings from the study indicated that students’ lack of educational goals, in this case a disinterest in studying multicultural education, impeded the transformational learning objectives of the course. The students’ monologism was grounded in their ideological conviction that they did not need to learn the required material. However, when students were allowed to contribute topics and ideas of their own to take ownership of the direction of their learning, they were more willing to engage in the class dialogue both face-to-face and in online discussions. Abd Elkader concluded that dialogic pedagogy does not necessarily lead to transformative experiences for students, but it “allowed students the opportunity to author their own learning in response to views and life experiences that challenged them and encouraged them to consider different versions of the truth as they knew it” (Abd Elkader, 2016, p. 11).

In a study of urban teacher preparation, Whiley and Magee (2016) investigated the following questions: “(1) In what ways do clinical experiences support prospective teachers’ (PTs) development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for urban teaching?, and (2) How is it determined that adjustments need to be made to the design and facilitation of clinical experiences, and what did these adjustments yield in terms of student learning outcomes?” (p. 110). Situated in “a [predominantly White, female] elementary teacher education program that is committed to, and focused on, developing [teacher candidates] who are critically conscious” (p. 110), this longitudinal, ethnographic study took place over a two-year professional program that included multiple design iterations. Data specifically analyzed in this research study included four sources: (1) artifacts and dialogue from instructors’ cyclical thinking around facilitating
teacher candidates’ learning from clinical experiences, (2) conversations with teacher candidates, (3) interviews with teacher candidates at the end of the program, and (4) capstone projects.

Findings from the study indicated that the intentional design and assessment of dialogue paired with clinical experiences deepened teacher candidates’ understandings and representations of culturally relevant teaching and prepared them to notice and address oppressive or problematic schooling practices that marginalized students of color. In addition, clinical experiences that were supported with mediational activities (facilitated dialogue) strengthened teacher candidates’ critical consciousness and contributed to the development of their identities as urban teachers.

While the studies described above illuminate the “why” of employing critical dialogue in developing cultural competencies and critical consciousness in teacher candidates, we know less about the “how”—the practice of facilitating critical dialogue. The empirical research outlined in the next section provided some insight into teacher educators’ practice that focused on the facilitation of critical dialogue in teacher preparation classes. This provided a background on the current literature and the need for further research on the lived experience of this phenomena for teacher educators.

**Teacher Educators’ Studies of the Facilitation of Critical Dialogue**

For this review of literature, I have located three studies that were pertinent to helping me understand the tensions experienced by teacher educators as they planned for and facilitated critical dialogue about race with teacher candidates. I also selected these studies because the teacher educators focused on dialogue as a transformative practice. In this section, I first summarize each of the three studies and then discuss consistencies across the studies to highlight the significance of the studies.
The first study by Cutri and Whiting (2015) emphasized the “imperatives of multicultural teacher education” (p. 1010) and deep emotional work for teacher candidates and teacher educators. This study examined the efforts of two experienced, pre-tenured teacher educators in approaching multicultural education from a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999) and an ethic of discomfort (Foucault, 1994; Zembylas, 2010). Cutri and Whiting employed a narrative approach to inquiry to answer the following question: “What types of emotional work are entailed in approaching multicultural education from a pedagogy and an ethic of discomfort?” (p. 1010). The literature in the study reviewed the concepts of the pedagogy of discomfort and ethic of discomfort as well as the challenges of implementation. Foucault (1994) defined an “ethic or discomfort” as a mindful effort of individuals to constantly challenge and critique one’s own preconceptions and suppositions. Simply put, “an ethic of discomfort is a construct that acknowledges and addresses teachers’ emotional efforts to cope with the growing diversity in schools” (Cutri & Whiting, 2015, p. 1012). Employing a pedagogy of discomfort includes challenges such as student resistance or intense emotional work and pain by the teacher educator as they begin to challenge their perceptions of social inequities and oppressive instructional structures.

Findings highlighted the myth of class-neutrality between professors and students and the tensions that arise in classroom conversations as teacher educators and their students engage in dialogue about people from non-dominant cultures. They found that teacher educators struggled to manage emotional reactions during critical dialogues that created a conflict between the “private realm” of their internal emotions and the “public realm” of the classroom. In addition, their findings revealed that teacher educators experienced emotional work when their lived experience or personal history collided with student resistance or unexpected student reactions.
during critical dialogue around issues of diversity. They noted that when they allowed their emotions or assumptions to enter the dialogue unchecked that students dis-engaged or escalated confrontations driven by emotional responses.

In a second study, DePalma (2008) focused on the complexities faced by students of color in a university course dominated by White students. As part of a broader self-study about the researcher’s adoption of a Bakhtinian dialogic framework in her practice, the purpose of this study was to examine one particular dialogue around race and ethnicity. The study took place in the context of a course titled “Cultural Diversity, Schooling, and the Teacher” that was required for students seeking a degree in Elementary Education. DePalma was the instructor in the course. Data collection from this study drew on the teacher educator’s reflective journal, students’ weekly narrative responses, web-based discussions, and private individual student feedback cards.

Findings of this study indicated that the teacher educator in this study experienced tension between her desire to create a safe environment for all students to share their stories while at the same time trying to lead them to the “right” conclusions. The teacher educator must recognize that their voice is never neutral and is preceded by institutional practices like assessment and academic authority that create power differentiations. Furthermore, in order to bring minority voices into the dialogue, teacher educators must be intentional about creating safe spaces where Whiteness as a social construct can be scrutinized and where teachers and students do not “essentialize even a single person’s voice” (DePalma, 2008, p.771), including the voices of White students and that of the professor. Teacher educators must consider the “embodied dialogue” that occurs between individuals “engaged in the historical moments of living” (Hicks, 2000, p. 277 as cited in DePalma, 2008). As they became more intentional in
structuring equity-oriented curriculum, pedagogy, texts, and activities, they found that “outsider” (DePalma, 2008, p. 71) voices began to join the dialogues when they had initially remained silent. Finally, like Cutri and Whiting (2015), DePlama (2008) found that she struggled with feeling underprepared to model the conversational transactions of individuals to develop multicultural literacy. Facilitating dialogues around complex issues required a teacher educator who was emotionally ready to enter into an exchange with their students and was conscious of their own history, biases, and assumptions.

The final article draws on five different empirical studies to analyze discursive practices in multiple settings (Laman et al., 2012). Although only one of the five studies addressed critical dialogue in teacher education, they all aimed to support practitioners in education as they worked to develop more socially just and critical practice—or engaged in what Freire (1970) coined praxis. Participants included five experienced teacher educators who shared an interest in critical discourse analysis. The settings and populations of the five studies included dialogues around immigration picture books by middle school students, texts on homelessness within a teacher study group, issues in critical literacy with teacher candidates, systems of poverty by a culture circle of working-class adults in Brazil, and photo-essays that challenged negative stereotypes in a teen youth organization. Over the course of this two-year study, data collected included all artifacts gathered for each of the five individual studies: transcripts from participants’ dialogue, their photo essays, and other participant writing.

Findings indicated that critical dialogue was supported by planning for and honoring sufficient time for dialogue, the behavior and responsibilities of the facilitator, and the intentional use of the critically facilitative language. Laman et al. (2012) found that by protecting time and space for dialogue about issues of race and equity that disrupted teacher candidates’
perspectives, a degree of supportiveness and reciprocal vulnerability surfaced in their participants. Like Cutri and Whiting (2015) and DePalma (2008), the teacher educators in this study grappled with issues of power in the non-neutral environment where they were working to co-construct knowledge with their students on equal ground. They found that, when facilitators employed questions to encourage participants to deconstruct traditional ideas and reconstruct them through the lens of their lived experience, participants were encouraged to interrogate the status quo and think critically about oppressive structural dynamics, including those between professor and student. However, these voices did not always join the more public, verbal interactions during class dialogue, but rather surfaced in alternative dialogic spaces. When the facilitators incorporated a variety of discussion opportunities through web-interactions or private feedback in addition to public critical dialogue, students traditionally underrepresented in these activities engaged in dialogue through these outlets (Laman et al., 2012). These findings contributed to my study since the role of the facilitator is essential in creating the culture of dialogue in the teacher education classroom.

Taken collectively, these studies illuminate some of the intricacies in facilitating dialogue. However, what they lack are description-rich insights into the strategies employed by White teacher educators to navigate complex critical dialogues, to examine their racial awareness and preparedness to facilitate critical dialogue, or to reflect on and adjust their practice to support the development of teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy. Therefore, the present study is important in that it deepens the current research on how teacher educators experience the various aspects of the facilitation of critical dialogue. Furthermore, the literature only begins to examine the role of the facilitator in negotiating power dynamics during classroom discourse. The present study will provide greater insight into the ways teacher educators intentionally plan
for and revise their facilitation to address issues of power. Finally, there is scarcity of research that explores the intersection of teacher educators’ racial identity and their facilitation practice. The present study illuminates the possibility for a better understanding of how White teacher educators manage the tensions created by this intersection while facilitating critical dialogue.

Summary

This chapter outlined the literature that informed this study. It began with a review of the current literature on teacher preparation, which focused on developing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills to teach in a racially diverse society as outlined by the constructs of cultural competence and critical consciousness. Next, I defined the terms “critical social justice” and “critical social justice literacy” as understood in this study followed by a synthesis of the current literature on critical dialogue as a pedagogy to develop critical social justice literacy. Finally, a presentation of the current empirical research on the facilitation of critical dialogue as one strategy to develop critical social justice literacy in teacher candidates provided a backdrop for this dissertation study: an exploration of White female teacher educators who are committed to developing the critical social justice literacy of the teacher candidates with whom they work through the facilitation of critical dialogue about race in the courses they teach. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I will discuss my research design, including participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my research methodology for this qualitative study that seeks to describe the lived experiences of White teacher educators and the meaning they make of the facilitation of critical dialogues about race with teacher candidates. First, I outline my research design as a basic qualitative study grounded in the epistemological perspective of social constructivism to establish how my views about knowledge creation guide every aspect of this study. Next, I discuss methodological decisions inducing the rationale for selecting in-depth phenomenological interviewing, a description of the interview technique, and a rationale for participant selection followed by descriptions of methods for data collection and analysis. I close with an overview of the methods used to maintain credibility and trustworthiness and a statement of positionality within this work.

Qualitative Research Design

Methodology is “a way of thinking about social reality” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3). The research methodology that aligns with the purpose of this study is a basic qualitative study that draws on a phenomenological perspective. Merriam (2009) asserted that the purpose of a basic qualitative study is “to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences” (p. 24). One underlying assumption in basic qualitative research is that “meaning is not discovered but constructed . . . by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42-43).

For the purpose of this current study, I employed a qualitative research methodology because I was interested in understanding how teacher educators interpreted and made meaning of their experiences with facilitating critical dialogue. Hence, social constructivism provided the
epistemological framework upon which this study was based. A social constructivist epistemology assumes that knowledge is constructed individually or collectively and varies from person to person. From this perspective, there is no universal truth since knowledge is born from the frame of reference of the knower and is constructed through a person’s experiences within the world (Jonassen, 1991; Von Foerster, 1984; Von Glasersfeld, 1988). It assumes that humans construct knowledge as they attempt to make sense of the interactions (Jonassen & Land, 2012) they have with “the world and objects in the world” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 43-44) and the content of their consciousness. Social constructivism brings a forced, critical awareness of the ways individuals experience and perceive the world (Hoffman, 1990). It foregrounds the “plasticity of the human organism and its susceptibility to [the] socially determined interference” of power, privilege, and culture (Berger & Luchmann, 1991, p. 67). No individual’s constructed sense of the world is any more or less ‘true’ than another’s, as long as it is relevant in the context (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996).

Language is central to a social constructivist epistemology because it is through language that people exist and construct reality (Bakhtin, 1981; Freeman, 2014). Social constructivists are interested in narrative accounts that acknowledge the absence of one “unequivocal meaning” in the community of voices (Weinberg, 2014, p. 73). Social constructivists are concerned with the interactions in which language occurs, focusing on the individual and their sense of constructed truth in the social context (Crotty, 1998). There are no facts which we must come to know, no claim to truth, but rather relationships between people in which we “consciously and unconsciously. . . weigh out different views, agreeing with some and disliking others. . . selectively pay[ing] attention, noticing some things, missing others” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 3).
These underlying assumptions of social constructivism form the epistemological basis for the present study. As such, interviewing was selected as the primary data collection strategy in order to understand the ways participants constructed meaning from the act of facilitating critical social justice dialogue about race with teacher candidates.

**Qualitative Interviewing**

The primary goal of this study was to portray the essence of the experience of facilitation as illuminated by the participants in their own words. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted that in-depth qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to “explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own” (p.3). They further noted that in-depth interviewing helps the researcher explore multiple perspectives to “create portraits of complicated processes” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.3). In-depth interviewing and the use of an interview guide provides compelling descriptions through which the researcher can reach a “saturation of information” (Glaser & Straus, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that enables the researcher to “come to understand the details of people’s experiences from their point of view” (Seidman, 2013, p. 144).

Seidman (2013) asserts that “in-depth interviewing encourages people to reconstruct their experience actively within the context of their lives” (p.11). He developed a three-phase method for phenomenological in-depth interviewing based on Schutz’s (1967) interpretation of Husserl’s (1960) original theory of phenomenology. This three-phase model includes a series of three separate interviews with each participant designed to contextualize and investigate the experiences. The first interview is a focused life history. In the second interview, participants share stories of their experiences of the topic under study. In the third interview, participants reflect on their experiences named and shared during the second interview. Through the scaffolded process of reconstructing and articulating the experience over the series of interviews,
the participant makes meaning of the experience. Phenomenological in-depth interviewing provides a method for capturing the meaning made of the phenomena under exploration as it interacts with the details of events from participants’ past. Therefore, I specifically selected Seidman’s (2013) method for formal in-depth phenomenological interviewing because it aligned with the aim of my study to convey the “subjective understanding” (Schutz, 1967, as cited in Seidman, 2013) of these teacher educators’ experiences in facilitating critical dialogues about race with teacher candidates.

**Participant Selection**

As this study focused on the experience of teacher educators in facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates to develop critical social justice literacy, participants were identified through purposeful sampling to provide “information-rich cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (Patton, 2015, p. 265). Through the excavation of details about the lived-experiences of a few individuals, readers will be able to “appreciate more the intricate ways in which individuals’ lives interact with social and structural forces” (Seidman, 2013, p. 55). In order to present the experiences of teacher educators in compelling detail and sufficient depth for readers to more profoundly understand how their experiences connect with one another (Cresswell, 2007), this study focused on a small sample of participants who were selected based on specific criteria to help me make sense of the phenomenon of facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates. The participants were identified by the following criteria appropriate to the study’s purposes and resources: (1) They were identified by professional organizations as experienced facilitators of critical dialogue that focused on issues of race and social justice with teacher candidates; (2) In online profiles and professional bios listed on their institutional websites, they described themselves as teacher educators with an equity-stance, that is they foreground diversity and social justice issues in their
research and practice; (3) They identified as White and female to reflect the current dominant demographics of teacher educators; (4) Through personal and professional interactions with me they appeared eager to collectively examine their equity praxis and engage in opportunities to make sense of their work as teacher educators; and finally, (5) At the time of selection, they worked as teacher educators in the context of a higher education program that culminates in a teaching credential.

In order to find participants that met the criteria for this sample, I turned to the members of the School Reform Initiative (SRI) who frequently participated in the annual Pre-Service Teacher Education Retreat and working group. As an organization, SRI offers seminars and institutes designed to prepare educators for work in transformational learning communities. Their mission, as outlined on their website, is “to create transformational learning communities that are fiercely committed to educational equity and excellence” (School Reform Initiative, 2018). As members of SRI, these educators have extensive training and practice in the use of protocols in the facilitation of critical dialogue. Protocols are a script or series of timed steps used to support focused exchanges on a chosen topic. Though these teacher educators are trained in utilizing protocols, it is important to note that I have not outlined the use of a protocol in the critical conversation as a factor in this study. The focus of this study was on the teacher educators’ perceptions of the experience of facilitation and not on the structures, or lack thereof, of the dialogue itself.

As a member of the School Reform Initiative (SRI) Pre-Service Teacher Education Retreat, I initially sought recommendations from teacher educators who were members of the professional learning group at the retreat. The members of this group had an intimate working knowledge of teacher educators who were experienced facilitators. I was directed to the SRI
leadership team to further identify potential participants from this pool, and I contacted Kari Thierer (SRI Executive Director) and Beth Graham (SRI Professional Development Specialist) for their recommendations of teacher educators within the organization whom they identified as experienced facilitators of critical dialogue with teacher candidates that focuses on issues of race and social justice. This yielded six possible participants. I then reviewed the online profiles of those participants to confirm whether they met the other criteria for this study. One participant was removed from the list because she was not White. The other two potential participants were removed from the list because, although they met the other criteria, their work was imbedded in alternative teacher preparation programs within a school district and not in the context of higher education. I sent a recruitment email (Appendix A) to the remaining three participants who agreed to participate and signed and returned the informed consent.

This study focused on gathering “information-rich” (Patton, 2015, p. 311) data from a small sample of three participants. In describing the relationship between the number of participants in a study and the amount of usable data, Morse (2000) explained that when “interviewing each person many times, one has a large amount of data for each participant and therefore needs fewer participants in the study” (as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 311). Therefore, to assure that interviews would yield information-rich data, I intentionally recruited participants that expressed an interest in reflecting on the nature of the phenomenon of study and that were willing to participate in the in-depth interviews (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection

Data collection for this study included interviews designed to explore the lived experiences of teacher educators who facilitate critical dialogue about race with teacher candidates enrolled in their classes or seminars. The teacher educators in this study participated in three interviews, approximately 90-minutes each, over a one-month period. Interviews were
scheduled from one to two weeks apart depending on the availability of the participants and conducted and recorded via Zoom, a video interview software, and later transcribed. Because the purpose of interviewing was to capture the consciousness of the participants through their utterances, I recorded the interviews to remain as true as possible to each word the participants spoke (Vygotsky, 1987) and hired a transcription service to transcribe them verbatim. I listened to each interview as I read along with the audio to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts and make corrections when necessary. These semi-structured interviews reflected Seidman’s (2013) in-depth interview framework. To maintain the focus of each interview, I used an interview guide that included open-ended prompts (Appendix B), but the wording and order were adjusted as needed in order to best navigate each participant’s experiences (Merriam, 1998).

The first interview, a focused life history, put the participant’s experience as a teacher educator in context and situated it in a range of previous experiences. Participants were asked during a 90-minute formal interview to reconstruct their life experience up to the present time with a focus on how, not why, they arrived at their current practice. They were asked questions intended to reflect on the overarching question: How did you come to be a teacher educator with an equity stance interested in engaging teacher candidates in critical dialogue about race? Questions provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their familial experiences around equity. For example, participants were asked to “share a story about a time that was significant to you in understanding the impact of race or cultural issues on your family or a close member in your community.” In addition to their experiences with their family and community, participants were asked to tell about their experiences as a student and in their K-12 teacher preparation. Probing questions and prepared question stems were used to encourage participants to expand on their stories and provide deeper descriptions (Hatch, 2002).
The second interview concentrated on the participant’s reconstruction of the experience related to the phenomenon of this study. During this interview, the participant was asked to describe the details, but not their opinion, of the experience in the study. Questions for this interview were designed to reconstruct the participant’s current experiences in relationship to the phenomenon facilitating critical dialogue about race, with the overarching questions: What is it like for you to be a teacher educator with an equity stance? How do you facilitate dialogue with teacher candidates around issues of diversity and social justice? What are the details of your practice? This second interview of experience, feeling, and sensory questions solicited rich “descriptions of experiences, behaviors, actions and activities” (Patton, 1990, p. 290), engaged participants in an exploration of their emotions related to the phenomenon, and solicited sensory details as participants reconstructed their perception of experiences as related to the facilitation of critical dialogue with teacher candidates. Because the experience of facilitation occurs within the larger context of a course or seminar for which the participant plans, participants were asked to reflect on how they conceive of and plan for critical dialogue. In addition, participants were asked to reflect on their experience in mediating their own beliefs as well as perceived moments of tension or resistance as students struggle to confront the content or process the facilitation of critical dialogue.

Finally, the third interview asked the participant to reflect on the meaning of their experience by connecting the intellectual and emotional aspects of their personal and professional lives. It focused on the overarching questions: How do you understand your role as a teacher educator in facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates? How do you navigate the tensions between theory and practice in developing teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy? This final interview explicitly focused on how the participant makes sense of the
experience. For example, participants were asked to describe the intersection of their race and their role as a teacher educator with an equity stance and to discuss their perception of the ways their Whiteness impacts their understanding of the facilitation of critical dialogue with their students. During this interview, participants considered how their lived experiences within a variety of contexts has led them to their present experience in facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates.

**Data Analysis**

Drawing from the inductive tradition of qualitative research, I reduced the data for each participant through multiple phases of analysis to “understand the meanings that participants attribute to their actions – their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). These phases included: (1) crafting a profile, (2) identifying and analyzing themes across the data, and (3) interpreting the material.

Narrative profiles provide an avenue for researchers to “bring the participant alive [and] offer insights into the complexities” of a phenomenon (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2004, p. 219-220). Following one model outlined by Seidman (2013) for analysis of phenomenological in-depth interviewing, I reduced the transcript data to craft a participant profile for each participant. This method of data analysis centers the presentation of data almost entirely on the participants’ words to allow their stories to “display coherence in the constitutive events of participant’s experiences… and to link the individual’s experience to the social and organizational context…” (Seidman, 2013, p. 123). The profile process occurs sequentially and demands a willingness of the researcher to let go of the interview material, placing the voice of the participant in the foreground over any framework or theory (Seidman, 2013).

I began the initial phase of the reduction process for each participant after all three interviews of all participants had been completed. First, I completed a close read of each
transcript and bracketed and labeled individual passages in which the basic elements of each participants’ facilitation experience surfaced. Keeping in mind that the interview experience and interaction with the researcher can impact the way participants make sense of the phenomena of facilitating dialogue (Seidman, 2013), I returned to all three interview transcripts for each participant to explore and document continuity to “check for the consistency of . . . [participant responses] over time” (Patton, 2015, p. 662).

In the next phase, I looked at the transcript data across all three interviews to craft profiles of each teacher educator. To begin the construction of participant profiles, I sorted bracketed passages into categories and applied initial labels. Next, using word-processing software, I cut and pasted labeled passages into a new document, being careful to remain focused on each participants’ perspective of their experience of facilitating critical dialogue. I combined all passages I identified as important into one “new” transcript, which became the individual narrative profiles for each participant.

I then engaged with the “new” transcript to further reduce the data and highlight those passages that were most compelling. Part of telling the participants’ stories was organizing the narratives in a way that best reflected the data. Writing and re-writing the narrative profiles was a process that provided clarification and made the data more “amenable to analysis” (Seidman, 2013). Throughout the process of developing the narrative profiles, I made intentional connections to the ways critical social justice literacy concepts were explained by the participants as they navigated the tensions between their own lived-experiences or emotions and their facilitation role. For this reason, the organization of all transcripts followed the same parallel structure that names the chronological emergence of each participant’s practice as it intersected with their personal histories and contextual experiences from childhood to the time of
the final interview. These segments include the participants’ youth, revelatory moments on the path to facilitation, facilitating critical dialogue, and their perceptions of the role of a teacher educator in facilitating critical dialogue. These passages became the core of the teacher educator profiles presented in this study. Figure 3-1 is representative of this process.

Figure 3-1. Reducing the “New” Transcript. Photo courtesy of author.

To remain focused on the participants’ perspectives, I used a first-person point of view to tell the participants’ stories in their own words (Seidman, 2013). As recommended by Seidman (2013), I used the participants’ exact words to construct their individual narrative profiles, including notations to indicate language that I inserted or deleted for clarity and to make the profile more readable. First, I deleted idiosyncrasies such as “like” and “you know” as well as repetitive words and phrases to “do the participant justice in a written version of what he or she has said” (Seidman, 2013, p. 124). Second, I bracketed words that I inserted for clarity or transitional purposes or to indicate a change in word-tense. Although I originally used ellipses to
denote deleted material from a sentence or paragraph or when I spliced similar ideas into one sentence, this made the narrative difficult to read. Therefore, I removed ellipses from the final narrative profiles to foreground the voice of the participant. The reference citations in Chapter 5 refer to the original interview transcripts. For example (2.6.30-33) refers to interview two, page six, lines 30-33 from the original interview transcripts.

To further explore connecting patterns in the interviews, I analyzed the “new” transcript and developed initial common themes and descriptions to determine patterns related to the study objectives (Patton, 2015). Throughout this process, I developed codes to demark categories that emerged from the data. Charmaz (2006) asserted that “coding means that we attach labels to segments of the data that depict what each segment is about” (p. 3). As a method for further distilling and sorting data, coding enabled me to draw comparisons between segments of the data. This process is illustrated in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2. Organizing the Codes. Photo courtesy of author.
Throughout the coding process, I carefully considered initial codes to help me make sense of participants’ stories, utterances, and silences. Line-by-line coding helped me focus on the data through an analytical lens that “free[d] [me] from becoming so immersed in [my] respondents’ worldviews” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51) that I lost the critical perspective that allowed me to question my data. In this reduction phase of analysis, I returned to the data again to cull the codes and examine patterns in the coded material that may have reflected predispositions I brought to the reading of the transcripts.

Finally, after forming categories, I synthesized predominant connecting codes across the data, with special attention paid to passages or outliers that indicated significant contradictions. To “test for . . . consistency” across all sources (Patton, 2015, p. 317), I created a chart that outlined all themes that emerged for each participant and cross checked those themes against one another to identify inconsistencies.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, one way researchers can account for the quality of their research is to establish the trustworthiness of their study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness, a term in qualitative research that is analogous to rigor in quantitative research, includes the constructs of credibility and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ways I established trustworthiness - credibility and transferability – are outlined below. In addition, to establish trust in my interpretations of the participants’ stories, I have also included a description my use of a reflexive journal as well as a statement of positionality to reveal my subjectivity within the context of this study (Patton, 2015, p.685).

Credibility

Credibility is a fundamental criterion for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. It involves how data are interpreted and seeks to address the questions “What counts as
credible evidence and by what criteria shall credibility be judged?” (Patton, 2015, p.694). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility as the degree to which a description of human experience is such that those having the experience would recognize it immediately and those outside the direct experience can understand it. To address issues of credibility in this study, I employed multiple techniques including peer debriefing and member checking.

To establish credibility in this study, I met on multiple occasions with two separate peer debriefers (my committee chair and a colleague who is a former graduate of my current program) to reflect on the decisions I was making and to gather input into the developing themes. Peer debriefing provides opportunities for the researcher to lay bare their methods and analysis to a disinterested peer, with the purpose of “exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the researcher’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Using the notes I took during these conversations, I returned first to the transcripts and eventually to the narrative profiles to further refine the themes. Using peer debriefing through the process of reduction, I was able to distill the “essence or essences of [the participants] shared experiences” (Patton, 2015, p. 116).

As a second method for establishing credibility, I chose to include member checking to affirm the decisions I made during data analysis and the constructions of profiles and themes. The method of in-depth interviewing demands that the participants and interviewer engage with one another over a long period of time and fosters an environment for persistent observation during interviews. As time spent with interviewees increases, “they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell you” (Patton, 2015, p. 685), thereby attending to credibility in this study. Therefore, I corresponded with participants about the interpretations at several points during data analysis. First, prior to the beginning of the second interview, I
provided a synopsis of the first interview to check my initial understandings (Seidman, 2013). In addition, to confirm the accuracy of my perspectives that emerged from the data, I made available to the participants via email their interview transcripts, individual profiles, an outline of the themes and supporting quotes that emerged across the interviews, and the final report (Glesne, 2011) and extended the opportunity for their comments and reflections at each stage of analysis and writing. Only one of the participants responded with comments or notes on the interpretation that affirmed my portrayal of her perceptions (Figure 3-4), though all confirmed receipt of their materials.

![Figure 3-4. Member Checking](image)

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the case-to-case transfer of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Tracy (2013) asserts that rather than trying to prove the generalizability of qualitative research, the researcher should instead consider choosing revealing cases to provide a “force of example” that resonates with the audience (p.239). Therefore, to increase the transferability of this study, the introductions to each participant profile in Chapter 4 include a thick, rich description of the course or seminar for facilitating dialogues with teacher candidates to situate this study in their current context. In addition, the very nature of participant profiles provides aesthetic merit...
(Tracy, 2013) to engage the audience in an emotional and interpretive response that invites them to transfer feelings about the participant experiences to their own context.

Transferability is further strengthened in the research design of purposeful sampling. As described in Chapter 1, the predominance of teacher educators in America continue to be White and females (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010). Until this demographic shifts, or perhaps in order to take specific action to shift this imbalance of racial representation, it is imperative that researchers continue to examine this demographic to better understand and prepare White teacher educators to enact a cultural social justice practice. Therefore, I deliberately selected participants with the idea that the practices of these teacher educators would be transferable to the larger population of White female teacher educators. Participants for this study were selected because they represented the population that correspond with the research questions and the White teacher educators to whom the findings of this study might be transferred.

**Reflexive Journal**

Reflexivity, or the way in which a researcher “understand[s] and depict[s] the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness” (Patton, 2015, p.604) is essential in contributing to the trustworthiness of a study. Therefore, I maintained a reflexive journal to record my thoughts throughout the data collection and analysis process. The journal provided a documented record of the ways I made sense of my interactions with participants during the interviews or peer debriefing. I recorded topics and new ideas discussed during these interactions to support my reflection and to maintain an audit trail of the data analysis. Figure 3-3 provides an illustration of this process.
During analysis, it was imperative that I “monitor and report [my] analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible” (Patton, 2015, p. 531). Through each phase of analysis, I returned to the reflexive journal to “bracket personal past knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge” (Giorgi, 2006 as cited in Patton, 2015) and ask self-critical questions about the decisions I was making during analysis. Using the journal as a tool for internal dialogue, I engaged in the conscious exploration of the preconceived biases or assumptions that I brought to the coding process (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Patton, 2015) by systematically asking myself three types of questions: (1) reflexive questions about myself as the researcher; (2) reflexive questions about the participants; and (3) reflexive questions about the audience (Patton, 2015). Questions in this category included “How do I know what I know?” or “How have my perceptions and my background affected the data I have collected and my analysis of those data?” (Patton, 2015, p. 604). Reflexive questions about the participants required me to consider what has shaped their worldview. For example, I asked myself questions like “What am I noticing about the way this participant was introduced to race dialogue within her family?” and
“What about my own family experiences with race dialogue is coloring my feelings about her experience?” Finally, reflexive questions about the audience demanded that I consider how those who read the findings will make sense of them or how the perceptions I have of the audience or they have of me will “affect what I report and how I report it” (Patton, 2015, p. 605). Using a reflexive journal allowed me to document “methodological decisions and rationales and to record [my] personal reflections of [my] values, interests, and insights” about myself as the “human instrument” (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

**Positionality Statement**

My positionality is grounded in the demographic to which I was born; I am a White, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman. I have been afforded privileges that accompany my race, class, sexuality, and physical ability. These aspects of my identity color every aspect of my roles as a researcher, teacher, and human who exists in a larger socio-historical context. My positionality “cannot be separated from [my role as the] author” (Cresswell, 2013, p.215) of this study therefore should be laid bare to the reader in order to “explain my biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken (Merriam, 2009, p.219). To draw back the curtain on various aspects of my perspective that I bring to this study, I name here those stories of my background that I believe have influenced the decisions to pursue research about race, teacher education, and teacher educator practice and the specific research questions that guided this study.

My father and his father and his father have Ph.D.’s and my mother’s father (though originally from a large, “dirt-poor” farming family) is a self-made millionaire who struggled to graduate from high school. Although my family is upper-middle-class, both of my grandparents came from working-class, immigrant roots. Within my family, there is a tremendous message of pride, identity, and the expectation that individuals can, and should, rise above their station. As a
result, I fully embraced meritocratic notions of individualism, grit, and social mobility. My everyday thinking about the tools individuals needed to attain success was driven by a belief that if people worked hard and learned to play by the dominant rules, they could overcome their station and “be rewarded by upward economic and social mobility” (Adams, Hopkins, & Shlasko, 2016, p. 218). Following this logic, if one succeeded it was on their own merit, and if they did not reach predominant measures of economic, intellectual, or social success then the failure rested squarely on their shoulders. As an educator, I was not without empathy and what I naively considered at the time to be an equity-stance. It was my goal to teach my students and their families the skills they needed to navigate a White, meritocratic society. But what I failed to realize by adopting this “savior” stance was that by forcing these internalized and accepted mainstream ideologies on traditionally marginalized families, in many ways I further ostracized, silenced, and dishonored their histories. Rather than create spaces for these students to bring their voice to my classes and develop their agency in dismantling the status quo, I engaged in inequitable practices that stripped them of their dignity and bolstered the hegemony.

In addition, I was raised in a large, predominantly Republican, conservative family from the Southeastern United States that is vocally racist and at various points in history from the 1890’s to the 1950’s employed Black servants and “Nannies” for a pittance. My grandfather was fired from his teaching position at a local community college in the 1970’s for asking a Black student in his class on Machine Mechanics if he “wanted to be a [N-word] for the rest of your life or the Boss.” To this day, when he recounts this story, he still believes what he said was in this young man’s best interest. I know that my experiences and the racism, judgment, and anger towards “others” that resonated through my family has left an indelible imprint on the way I
make sense of and interact with the world. It is in my continued awareness of these ghosts and a
daily effort to examine my thoughts and actions that I will find my best self.

Regardless of the opportunities I had to examine the inequities in socioeconomic status,
gender, and learning styles in my undergraduate teacher preparation and Master’s courses, it
wasn’t until I entered the PhD program nearly 20 years into my career as an educator that I began
to develop a “language of critique” (Giroux, 2007, p. 90) that helped me examine the privilege
paradox in our education system. As I became more acutely aware of the hidden curriculum and
the power of my pedagogical decisions in reinforcing the status quo, I began to reflect on some
strategies in my teaching that I needed to adjust using this new lens. This self-reflection on my
practice coincided with my introduction to the School Reform Initiative and opportunities to talk
at length with teacher educators about the way we enact pedagogies of discourse in our teaching.
I had long used the Socratic seminar and other discussion techniques in my work with middle
and high school students, but as I reflected on this practice it became clear to me that I had been
silencing students by failing to create a culture of critical dialogue that invited all students to the
table by creating spaces for students to explore their thinking, share their lived-experience, or
contribute to the dialogue in alternative ways that valued their individual needs. I imagine that
there are many teachers and teacher educators working in schools today that assume that by
including discussions in their classes, they are creating opportunities for all students to
participate when in fact, they are doing quite the opposite. The close examination of these
particular dominant beliefs sparked my research interests in social inequities and eventually led
me to explore the facilitation of critical dialogue about diversity and social justice to promote
change in the practice of teacher educators.
Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of my research methodology that included the rationale for a basic qualitative study as my research design. I then established how social constructivism guided every aspect of this study, followed by descriptions of in-depth phenomenological interviewing and the methods for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, I outlined the methods used to establish and maintain trustworthiness. In Chapter 4, I begin the presentation of this study’s findings by sharing the narrative profiles of each participant.
CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVE PROFILES

Introduction

In this study, I examined the facilitation experiences of three teacher educators who placed race in the foreground of critical dialogue to develop the critical social justice literacy of teacher candidates. Through in-depth interviewing, participants shared the experiences that led them to take an equity-stance and the meaning they made of the phenomena of critical dialogue in their classrooms. As outlined in Chapter 3, the purpose of in-depth interviewing is to “put behavior in context and provide access to understanding their action” (Seidman, 2013, p.19). Therefore, I employed phenomenological in-depth interviewing as a method to better understand how these three teacher educators made sense of the “how” of facilitation and “why” they arrived where they are.

In order to situate the reader in the context of the participants’ facilitation, I present the complete narrative profiles of each participant. I begin each narrative profile with an introduction in my words to each participant’s current instructional environment. This description includes a brief overview to their professional history, the demographics of their institution and a summary of their program or department including the courses or learning experiences in which they facilitate critical dialogue. My intent in the construction of each narrative profile is to give voice to the participants’ experiences; therefore, following the introduction to each participant that was crafted in my words, I present the story of each participant in their own words. Each participant’s story unfolds chronologically beginning with intimate descriptions of their youth, revelatory moments in their education or teaching experience, the actual practice of facilitating dialogue in their current professional contexts, and finally, the meaning they make of their role as a facilitator.
Amanda

Introduction to Amanda

At the time of this study, Amanda had served for over 20 years as a Professor of Education at a small, private liberal arts university in the southern United States. Her teaching and research focus on professional learning communities, secondary education practices, and transformational learning. Prior to working in higher education, Amanda served as a public high school foreign language and history teacher, a teacher-educator program coordinator, collaborated with practicing teacher and education professionals at various professional development schools, and facilitated dialogues around race and social justice at national conferences. Across these roles, Amanda describes herself as constructivist and an educator whose equity-stance is an ongoing “work in progress.”

To better understand the context in which Amanda facilitates critical dialogue with her students, it is helpful to see a broader picture of the professional context that establishes the foundation for her practice. Amanda teaches in an institution that foregrounds experiential learning and what they call “information literacy”, or the ability to engage in the critical, creative, and ethical use of information in their program designs. The student population is relatively diverse: 55% White, 7% International, 20% Hispanic, and 4 % Black, but according to Amanda the faculty is still predominantly White.

The Department of Education offers several one-year graduate programs which lead to a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and teaching certification. A minor in education that includes several courses in child development and learning exceptionalities, a concentration in either ESL or Special Education, and methods as well as a field experience is required for admission. Students enter the program during the summer session with coursework that immediately engages them in a critical study of curriculum theory, history, and practice in secondary schools.
and an examination and analysis of teacher roles and practices in the creation of knowledge. Students engage in clinical practice under the supervision of a mentor teacher at an assigned professional development school four or five days a week in fall and spring respectively in addition to evening face-to-face coursework with university professors. Within the Secondary program, she teaches master’s courses in curriculum and teaching inquiry in addition to supervising and leading seminars for undergraduate field experiences and graduate clinical practice.

Amanda describes the “ethos” of her institution as one that values teaching beyond the classroom and fosters academic and professional mentorship. For example, financial support is provided for professors to engage socially with their student advising groups during their first year in the teacher preparation program as a way for teacher candidates and advisors to develop relationships and demonstrate the advisors “investment in [the student] academically, but also . . . in [the student] as a person”. Class sizes are intentionally kept small as another element of program design to support student-teacher relationships and an intimate learning community, with undergrad classes of approximately twenty to twenty-five students and graduate cohorts around ten.

Dialogue protocols, literacy strategies, and conversational strategies are embedded in the field experiences and field-based seminar required for the Minor and continue in what Amanda describes as “part of the DNA of the department” in coursework across the programs.

**Amanda’s Youth**

I grew up in a working-class to middle-class bilingual home in a very White suburb of [a large southern state]. My dad was an immigrant from Germany and my mom from Holland, so I grew up speaking German and English simultaneously. [My parents] love[d] the rags to riches
immigration story. They had color and a Western European experience working in their favor as two White immigrants, so that certainly helped.

In 1976, which was a bicentennial year, my mom became a US citizen. My dad would joke all the time that my mom was the reason we would be able to stay in America, because he had a green card and they could deport us, and she was becoming a citizen so that they couldn’t [deport us]. I was a super serious kid and was curious about our status, so I really took that to heart. Why do you have to give up something to get the other one? [During this time in my home state], . . . [people] started talking about “wetbacks”, and I did not understand why it was really derogatory for some people but not for us. That was all very confusing and stressful to me.

As a kid in any situation I could see myself as the outsider because of some either uniqueness or difference, [but] I also found a lot of connection. It’s an interesting perspective to keep seeing what is both similar and different in any situation and how, no matter where I was, I could always see myself as the different person and as connected in some way to the people. I think [I first became aware of my Whiteness] in later elementary school. I played around with wanting to fit in and assimilate or blend in with the situation for lots of reasons, personality and otherwise. Teacher affirmation meant a lot to me.

Revelatory Moments on the Path to Facilitation

I [originally] went to [a private liberal arts school] to study law, but I was always really interested in social, civic and educational issues. I wanted to work on behalf of youth and/or women who didn’t have a voice or who needed more of a voice and help to right some situations that I thought were unjust. [In my undergraduate studies] there was this old guy [at a school where I mentored students] walking around the cafeteria every time we were there and talking to one of the kids. [He was] the Chair of the Education Department [and a] professor. The fact that he was sitting at the cafeteria tables with us tutoring really struck a chord with me, [so] I decided
to take a class with him [and] was intrigued by the course and what we were learning. [It was
during the semester] break [following that class that] I told my parents I thought I wanted to be a
teacher.

[My first-year teaching I had an] early wake up call to figure out about the racial,
economic, [and] social-capital dynamics that were happening in my classroom. One day, [in my]
senior government class, I was trying to do some kind of a group activity. One of the Latino
males just stood up and said, “Fuck you. Fuck you and fuck all this stuff.” Everybody’s eyes
were big. He looked at me [and said], “You are so unfair. You let them do whatever they want
and they get away with everything and they’re your favorites.” On the one hand, I was
embarrassed because I felt like he had called me out, but then I was relieved that he had. He was
right. I’m sure there was tension all along [and] he was naming a tension that had been there. I
thought, “Nobody prepared me for this.” It wasn’t a classroom management issue; it was a
fundamental issue about who I was as a teacher and how I was teaching. I realized that I needed
to become much more aware of the kids’ lived experience in the high school [and to] think much
more about creating a classroom community and relationships.

[When I went to graduate school after teaching for a few years], my best teacher [was]
interpersonal relationships where [I got] to know [people’s] stories. A small, [diverse] cadre of
grad students were particularly helpful in being a part of my educational experience because
[they] let me in very personally on all of the ways [they were] experiencing what we were doing.

Facilitating Critical Dialogue

[In my current work with teacher candidates], the big goal of critical conversation is to
figure out who are you, what are you bringing to this, and how is that influencing the decisions
that you’re making in your classroom around the experiences that students are going to have,
especially in thinking about uncovering bias. It starts with understanding what are your biases.
What assumptions do you bring? How do you see the world? And then, having those same conversations with others to figure out what does that mean for the decisions I’m making that are both opening up [or] limiting opportunities or expectations for people. I think of my equity stance as giving each individual voice and agency to communicate what is meaningful to them in dialogue.

[As a teacher educator] it’s a tricky negotiation in a highly political role, working in a bureaucratic system to try and keep figuring out not only my voice, but modeling for my own students what their voices [are going to] be because we’re modeling what their voice could be. I enlist lots of different people to be a part of the dialogue and conversation because I do think [of myself as] a facilitator not a didact. One thing that I intentionally do is co-teach with a woman of color. We’re always talking very openly and frequently about our students in the classes that [I] have, and there are times where we say, “You know, this has to come from you. I think this is where our students need to hear from a Latina around this thing.” Or sometimes she’ll say, “You’ve got to say it,” because we know that we can say the same thing and to different students, it comes out differently.

[To] help hold the larger ongoing conversation in the class we use the Singleton and Linton agreements¹. We have agreements or norms on the wall [and] practice those agreements in the context of the heated moment to unpack what’s happening for people. There is something about intellectual, emotional, and physical safety in [these agreements that help] you keep coming back to either the people, the idea, the concept. [But] it’s not always going to work or be pretty. There are times where you see agreements and you speak your truth and you share with

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¹ Singleton and Linton (2006) developed what they called the Four Agreements to create the condition for group members to engage in productive conversations about issues of race. These agreements are “stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak your truth, and expect and accept non-closure” (p. 58).
them, and people’s adrenaline starts running, or you have physiological responses to things. It’s complex.

In thinking about how adults develop and ways that they both know and come to know things, protocols\(^2\) provide a holding environment of support and challenge. They provide a way to slow down and to look really carefully at what’s going on and make sense [for] themselves and with other people. I think using familiar protocols can be helpful for some people some of the time [because] they’re asking you to stop and peel back these complexities or to unravel this to understand what’s happening, what all [is] operating here. [However], I know that there are students for whom protocols don’t honor people’s ways of knowing; they feel controlling and stifling. My job is to be reading the room and watching what’s going on, listening, trying to understand. [I’m] doing that at the same time that [I’m] facilitating. I don’t want people of color to have to stay at the table to make White people comfortable. And I also know that I don’t want White people to have to stay. Sometimes it’s about going to the balcony and taking a bird’s eye view on what’s happening in this situation. There are days where you can do something and then the next day you can’t do that same thing you did before. That’s where relationship is important; it’s not that I have the answer, it is that I’ll sit with you to help you work through this thing that you’re feeling and or experiencing and figuring out where do we go from here.

I am Constructivist in nature, and I really am thinking carefully about how students are going to make meaning from the experience in class. They’ll either read something or watch a video [as] some kind of preparatory work for the conversation, and then they come in to have an experience. That [experience] is where I really have to consider the effect is of using protocols,

\(^2\) A protocol is a structure for guiding a conversation or learning experience to ensure that the dialogue is purposeful and that participation is equitable.
[as well as] how often, and for what reason. [For example,] we always have them read a text beforehand and we use the “4 A’s protocol” as the reading prompt. We do not stray from that organizer with that text because I think it honors the multiple ways in which people come in. I use that a lot with the undergrads because I want them to know that the author has assumptions and that I have assumptions when I select something that we’re interacting with. That’s a point of power to be picking the curriculum [that] I want them to be able to articulate.

We decided that in our very first field-based course in our practicum, one of the first things we had to talk about was race and racial identity, because this is about teaching secondary students and that’s exactly what’s happening with [them]. I’m in an urban, culturally and ethnically diverse, economically segregated city that provides us a really important context to look at all of these dynamics and to think about schools. In that class we have seminar for an hour and then they work with kids for an hour. There’s something about that interplay that’s really important. If we were only teaching this course at the university and talking about the significance of race, systemic inequity in school, and about oppression and social justice, I don’t think it would hit home to them so much as when we go into a classroom in the very next minute and unpack it, either individually or collectively, and figure out what is this, what does this mean to me, what does this mean to other people and what am I going to do about it? That’s where we have to talk in my class about “what are other ways to consider secondary education”.

There is a hesitation once you’ve recognized [racist practices in schools] to respond to the inequity that either is taking place or that you realize you’re participating in or perpetuating. And

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3 The 4 A’s Protocol is designed “to explore a text deeply in light of one’s own values and intentions”. This protocol includes multiple discussion rounds during which participants engage with the text to examine the author’s assumptions, agree or argue with concepts, or identify ideas to which they aspire. [https://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/4_a_text.pdf](https://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/4_a_text.pdf)
then figuring out, “What will I do to address this situation both within the moment, but [also] working the larger sense around reinventing schools and systems that are more equitable”.

We do have White students who say, “I don’t have an ethnic identity”, “I don’t have a racial identity”, [and] “If I do, it’s been one that it’s either been an examined privilege or unexamined privilege. and then what am I gonna do with that?”, “What am I gonna do with this guilt?”. It shows up in implicit bias or in assumptions. That’s where we’ve been thinking about recognizing it and then figuring out, “What am I going to do with it?”, both in the moment of the context [and in the] larger sense around reinventing schools and systems that are more equitable.

That’s where it’s important to have small group conversation and then to have really good ears so when you introduce something. [When] they’re talking in a trio, [I give] space for students to say what they really think and [I’m] listening to and making sense all of that. They can choose to share in the larger group share-outs [once] they have had a chance to try out their thinking or to explain what their background is or their insights with at least one or two other people.

It [is important to have] a small enough course [for students] to be able to be in dialogue with students individually and as a group and to form a peer relationship over time. Peer relationships are so powerful. I think my grad cohort has 10 people, and the undergrad class might have up to 20, 25. [If you observed my class], you’d probably see students in small groups [with me] somewhere at a distance. There are times where I’ll sit at the table with the group, but a lot of times I’ll sit away from the groups to let them have their conversation [with] students facilitating a conversation. [We prepare students] through some gradual debrief [and] through a lot of debriefing the facilitator models [and] talking about the dynamics, the flow, and the nature of the conversation as a process as much as the content. [W]e might do some protocols whole
group where we model the facilitation role and they gradually take it on. Everybody’s expected to be a facilitator at some point.

I usually plan the groups that they’re in or I pick some intentional grouping mechanism or method. Race and ethnicity are factors. We do have one place in class where we have affinity groups⁴ because a conversation happens in the affinity group that sometimes creates more openings for the cross-cultural groups to happen as well. It’s important that we start there sometimes and give them recognition. Listening and learning across difference can happen, but it does require a community of practice, a community of learners. [In cross-cultural group conversations] there has to be a sense of inquiry and experimentation to try on and grapple [with ideas]. I [also] think about personality and disposition towards collaboration and cooperation. [My co-facilitator] and I were talking because we have someone who’s hard to work with, and so [we] pair those with kind people who will bring them along and spread out a little bit of those kinds of interactions as well.

I always plan some kind of a reflective debrief [of the] conversation, especially the protocol to talk about the dynamics and the flow and the process as much as the content. One student [described the class as] heavy because we do the protocol but then we debrief the protocol, [but it’s important] that we do a double debrief [to help them examine] how [they] explain this to [their future] students and what [they] would do as the teacher. The role of written reflection is interesting. Sometimes that might be an exit ticket, sometimes it’s in an

⁴ Racial affinity groups are comprised of people with a shared race. These groups provide the space for participants to disentangle layers of identity, bias, and institutional oppression with people of the same race. In the context of teacher education, race affinity groups put the onus on White teacher candidates to examine issues of race and racism without relying on people of color to teach them. Additionally, they provide spaces for students of color to share experiences and explore deeper issues of intersectionality and oppression only experienced by people of color.
assignment, sometimes it’s to post in a blog afterwards. The reflection after the moment hits you at different times and in different ways and over the span of all of those conversations.

**The Role of a Teacher Educator in Facilitating Critical Dialogue**

At some point I think I shifted from thinking I had to have the answers or being the teacher, to [acknowledging that] it’s not about me. I am a learner in this situation [and] consciously saying, “You teach me how I can be your best teacher in this situation, and I’m going to be your student.” That’s my Constructivist belief that everybody is going to find meaning and find where they are and come along, but it’s not because of me. I want to create opportunities where they’re interacting with the world, with other people, with text, and with ideas. I’m constructing an experience, but it’s going to take root so many different ways.

When we first started having conversations about race, it was tricky for me to be the facilitator, to be thinking--when my own development is right up there with everybody else’s--“Who am I to tell somebody?” [Over time, I learned to] moderate myself in the conversations much better than I could before. I still feel responsible and I feel involved and I feel committed, but I don’t feel overrun. It’s recognizing that there’s a lot of fallibility in humanity in any of these interactions that we have. I just try and sit in it to sit with the group in the moment and let go so that it can come.

[Taking notes] helps me in class dialogue to stay in the moment, stay analytical and quiet, and keep reading the social-emotional tenor of the room as well. I’m a problem solver [but] that doesn’t help them to come up with a solution. I can let a lot of things continue on in the conversation because I’m noting it and looking for the threads, and it’s not ping-ponging back to me. [As] they’re all talking, I do have to think about what key ideas I want to bring up at this moment [and] I come in at a point to mirror back to them, “Here’s what I’ve heard so far, here is what I think the three big themes are, and what do we think about that?” They take their sense-
making forward, and I don’t have to articulate my viewpoint at all. I think they watch [me taking notes] and know I’m highly engaged. I’m not checking my phone. I’m not on my computer. I’m right there with them. I think that kind of interest in what they’re saying communicates a lot.

It’s been hard for some people to find their way in because they felt left out from the beginning, and some of that might be a teaching approach, but it’s developmental. It feels sometimes like the student is in an ideological and pedagogical tug of war and that’s not a comfortable place for a young, emerging teacher to be. How [do I] bring people in where they are, and then help them to continue in the journey? In our institution sometimes it’s students of color [but] by and large, it’s the White middle-class female teacher [candidates] who have a lot of trepidation about not being “woke” enough to get in [to the dialogue]. If our strong Latina females start talking, [the White students] suddenly feel intimidated by the conversation. That’s one opportunity that I have as a White educator. This is a group of people with whom I could have a meaningful relationship, and I’m very consciously aware that I am modeling for particularly White students who are looking at me as a White teacher educator.

I did have a White female student in one of these experiences who completely shut down and marginalized everybody else in the group. It was [during] a consensus building activity without a leader or facilitator. She just had had her way with the group! In the debrief she still didn’t figure it out, nor did anybody call her on it, [so I asked], “What sense did you make of the fact that you just shut that whole thing down?” She had not considered it in the least. I followed up with an individual interview, and then she did not want to talk about it. I had to think about it in terms of her own life experience, so I let her simmer on it. [Not long after], I was driving her

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5 The term “woke” is a slang term currently used to describe one’s “intangible level of awareness about community issues and social justice” (Garfofalo, 2016).
to a school because she needed a ride and she said, “Well, I’ve been kind of thinking about that conversation that we started to have.”

If [I] think that everybody’s a learner and everybody can learn and everybody can develop, then it’s really about seeing people where they are. In this situation, it is about social and cultural reproduction and replication. [She] has to understand [she] doesn’t know some things. That’s very disconcerting for some people, and if that premise is disconcerting, it’s going to be tricky. But I also think at any age it’s not impossible to change your mind or to at least think about what you believe and the effect it’s having on students. At the very beginning [of the Bachelor’s degree], when they’re trying things out, it’s about creating an invitation to begin a dialogue and journey. Some of our students are way beyond that, but [for] some of them, it’s just the beginning of that journey.

I can say unequivocally that our Master’s students going into teaching are grappling very clearly, concretely, and actively with skills in developing a stance as an equitable educator. They. . . recognize that they had bias and how they responded to that, or inequity in a school or classroom situation and what they did about it [and] if they didn’t, what they would have done. They’re identifying what happened [during] a time where a student felt empowered or disempowered by a classroom experience or a time where they saw a student develop or emerge some aspect of their identity.

Our students are really good at playing along and telling you what you want to hear. And you can start feeling really good about yourself because our students are good at playing school. But I don’t even get worried if they don’t lean in or talk or if they look disgruntled because you don’t know what’s happening for students, especially in these areas. They find interesting ways to tell you that they did. I’m at this point in my life, this is both super urgent and probably one of
the most important things we do. We have to [accept that] we just don’t know what meaning people are going to make of personal identity development. Maybe that’s one of the things [I have learned] over time. I used to think it all depended on me and it doesn’t. It depends on so many different features and factors and in the end, I’m constructing an experience but it’s gonna take root and hold on in so many different ways. It’s complex.

In the end, I don’t think you can really know [if critical dialogue has helped develop students’ critical social justice literacy]. It’s a faith exercise that you have to believe you’re giving people some kind of opportunity to experience over a span of time something that was meaningful for them. It’s about trying to design some things and then just letting go once you’ve designed it to say that students are going to make of it what they will.

**Erin**

**Introduction to Erin**

At the time of this study, Erin was serving as teacher educator and director of a collaborative, cross-school teacher residency program between a large, public Southeastern Research 1 university and a community charter school. As an instructor and facilitator at all stages of the residency program, Erin’s teaching and research focuses on teacher preparation around cognitively-based compassion training and educational equity. Prior to working in higher education, Erin taught middle school science as an un-certified teacher in a private school for over a decade. With two degrees in psychology and numerous service awards across a variety of fields from social services to special education, Erin’s professional experiences paint a portrait of an individual devoted to improving the human experience.

To better understand the context in which Erin facilitates critical dialogue with her students, it is helpful to see a broader picture of the professional context that establishes the foundation for her practice. Erin’s program is situated in a large, racially and ethnically urban
area. With a population that is over 50% Black and home to one of the largest LGBTQ populations per capita, the community is no stranger to diversity. The university with which her teacher residency program partners reflects the community demographics in both student and faculty populations. Two-thirds of the student body is non-white (40% Black, 13% Asian, 10% Hispanic), and the faculty is over 50% non-white. The demographics of Erin’s program reflect this same level of diversity both within the faculty and teacher candidate population.

Teacher candidates enrolled in the partner university can earn a Bachelor of Science in Elementary or Middle Grades and the respective state teaching certification. Students who choose this route to certification commit to a three-year residency that progresses from their practicum (Year 1), to team-teaching with another resident (Year 2), and finally a lead teaching role with the support of a mentor teacher (Year 3). Program participants receive a stipend throughout their residency and are also paid a teacher salary during years two and three when they assume the role of teacher of record.

During the final year at the university, teacher candidates enter their three-year teacher residency program with Erin and her teaching team. The program structure is designed to immerse teacher candidates in a scaffolded, job-embedded experience aimed at preparing them to support students in high-needs schools. With that purpose, teacher candidates spend five days a week of their practicum working full-time with a cooperating teacher of record in the local K-8 charter school affiliated with the program. Beginning in the first year and sustained throughout all three years of their residency, teacher candidates participate in multiple small-group learning communities after the school day that include experiences with an explicit focus on transformation and equity in education. As part of three distinct learning communities, teacher candidates work collaboratively to examine dilemmas of practice around curricular and
pedagogical decisions and assessment practices and the impact these decisions and practices have on student outcomes. In addition, they receive training in Cognitively-Based Compassion Training⁶ that includes reflective and analytical exercises to support teacher candidates in developing a deep emotional awareness of their relationship with the self and others and to sustain compassionate practices.

Dialogue protocols, literacy strategies, and conversational strategies are embedded in the work of the learning communities and are sustained from Year 1 to Year 3. Teacher candidates are gradually introduced to the practice of facilitating critical dialogue such as establishing group norms for equitable participation, selecting appropriate protocols, and questioning techniques. During their novice teaching years in the residency, teacher candidates gradually subsume the responsibility for facilitating critical dialogue within their learning communities.

**Erin’s Youth**

Very broadly speaking, the community I grew up in was predominantly White pretty middle-class, middle upper class, fairly mixed race, neighborhood. [My neighborhood friends were] probably similar economically, varied racially. I attend[ed] an independent, private school K-12, Quaker school in a predominantly Black neighborhood. I think the emphasis in the Quaker school was really about everybody getting along and finding ways to negotiate peacefully and understand each other and not be aggressive toward each other. I would say that a sense [that] all people deserve freedom, fresh water, respect, rights, a voice, voting is still deeply in me through my Quaker upbringing. I definitely grew up with a deep belief, and also from my parents, that all people deserve that.

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⁶ Cognitively-based compassion training is a system of reflective and analytical exercises designed to strengthen and sustain one’s ability to understand their relationship to the self and others.
I feel like there was not a lot of explicit talk about race as I grew up, [either in the Quaker school or in my family which] really astonishes me now. My father and stepmother both brought the topic up in various ways. Whatever significant moments I now recall were kept very internal. But there were small moments like watching my father, if we ever took a cab ride in [the city], often the cab driver was a person of color, and he would always call that person “sir” and ask them a lot about their life during the cab ride. I remember watching that and thinking about that dynamic of his very intentional effort to connect and converse across race. There was something that felt different about what was happening there, and that may be both class and race playing out. There were just a number of noticing moments there where I thought, “I wonder why he’s doing that; I wouldn’t be inclined to do that.” It wasn’t really until college, and then really, beyond that, moving to the south, that I started my own journey into figuring it out.

Revelatory Moments on the Path to Facilitation

There was a moment when I was a freshman in college that somebody asked me if I had ever dated anybody Black. I identify as a White woman; I had had two boyfriends in high school that were Black, [and] I had never articulated or even, as far as I was conscious, thought about them as being Black. It took me a moment to answer, and then there were a flood of feelings and a resentment at being prompted to think about them as Black. Why did this person ask me that question? Why does it matter?

Reflecting on that moment, I remember [a] shifting thinking and language. I think that I had grown up with a lot of privilege related to my race and had never needed to think about race much. I felt like if I am a good person and I’m not bigoted, then I’m doing my job in the world I did not think about the impacts of privilege, of difference in race and how that actually can matter in a lot of situations and does lead to a lot of bad situations. That experience was the very beginning of a journey for me around noticing race in ways that allowed me to then be more of
an interrupter of systemic racism than an oblivious White person who thinks that everybody is treated the same as me.

A lot of [the shaping of my professional identity] comes back to finding my voice and realizing that my perspective had value for others and could lead to good and important work. It was a process of awakening to a sense of confidence. My undergraduate was in psychology, and my master’s degree was in neuropsychology. I never took education classes until I got an advanced degree in education. I had been [teaching] already for 11 years [when] I did an alternative [teacher] certification program that was basically a very mechanical little program on-the-side. I [had] completely developed my skill with teaching, my approach, all of that was alone in a classroom with kids; I just figured out what worked and did it. Definitely there were many moments where I knew that I couldn’t solve it by myself, [and then] I turned to colleagues who were friends. I felt like my own teaching and the teaching of those around me could be better if we collaborated more. I saw that throughout the entire school that teachers were teaching in silos, and they wanted to connect, but there weren’t mechanisms for it and we didn’t have the skill sets. Teacher leadership and teacher education grew out of that.

What I’ve learned since becoming a teacher and perhaps a more equitable teacher leader, is that compassion really is about understanding that [someone] is suffering or struggling, understanding the person’s experience and doing something about it. In a [graduate education] course I took, we were prompted to look at a school budget to see if there was alignment between the budget, the mission and vision statements, and where they put their money [because] it’s one thing to say you believe certain things, and it’s entirely different to align the systems to take your practice and the school’s actions in that direction. What I really realized is you should be able to look at a budget document for a school and figure out what they care about. That had
never occurred to me before, and I started to realize somebody should be able to look at me as a classroom teacher and know immediately what I care about. Somebody should be able to see my teacher leadership program that I’m running and know immediately from our actions, just our way of being and our systems that we’ve put in place, [that] we care about serving underserved communities [and] that everything I do can be designed in such a way that it’s living that out.

I think [compassion is] foundational [and that] more widespread consistent compassion has to be in place for the real social justice work to happen. The goal in the end is to help others be happier and flourish and suffer less. Nothing can happen for any of us without a sense of safety and then from that place having energy, good health, [and] curiosity. I think that that’s what compassion can lead to.

**Facilitating Critical Dialogue**

We anchor absolutely everything we do [during a critical dialogue] in getting to know each other, talking about norms, trying to clarify terminology. We explicitly name that we’re trying to establish a culture of forgiveness, self-forgiveness, self-compassion, and understanding. Sometimes [critical dialogue] scares people away. [But] I think it’s our path into all of the work. I don’t know that I see any other way to do it. I guess [you can say to students,] “Hey, you gotta check out this book. Check out this link. Watch this video.” But, the work that needs to be done is dialogue [because] that is what might create change. This is about people having problems with people. So the entry into that kind of discussion should be conducted with caution and awareness and open invitation where nobody feels like they’re going to be called out for anything, but called in, [not] expose[d], as flawed.

Connection, human connection, is at the core of everything we do. We know that babies are born with an affinity to feel connected. It is in our biology to feel a sense of connection. Without it, you’ve got nothing. I tend to approach everything first [to] establish connection, [to]
see where I am like you and you are like me and get to know each other and take our time with that. Especially if it’s somebody who’s really demographically very different from me. Potentially culturally very different from me. We’ve got to find where we are alike, or we’re going to have very little to build on. And from that place, we very naturally generate an ability to feel compassion for each other and to want to help each other be more happy and suffer less and struggle less. I think connectivity leads to a very natural sense of compassion, and compassion allows us to do the very important work that we’re doing in schools.

Fortunately, we have a very high functioning team [of mentors and facilitators within the teacher residency program] with a very diverse group of people. Age-wise, race-wise, gender, sexuality. We’ve got it all on our team, and we try to really use all these practices we’ve been trained in- compassion, talk[ing] to each other one-on-one in small groups, [or] as a whole team when it feels necessary. People do get angry or get emotional sometimes, but we all feel like this is the work. We’re doing the work as much as we’re asking the people we’re working with [to] do the work. We’re trying to design a program for other people to learn, but we’re going to have a lot of bumps in the road ourselves along the way and this is one of them.

Nobody plans alone. And nobody facilitates alone. It never will be an all-White facilitation team. We always try to have a team across racial difference doing the planning [who will] point out things to each other so that we don’t inadvertently dismiss anybody of any culture or their thinking, so that we’re raising up, so that we’re modeling multicultural pedagogy. [For example] maybe the article you’re talking about reading has three White authors. Why are you, a White woman, presenting an article by three White authors? None of us are probably as good as we could be with that, and so we need a multicultural eye on everything we do from the
planning, to the execution, to the follow up, to all of the structures, to the design of the program overall, to the mission and vision.

[Power is] potentially a really big factor. I’m the director of the program and I am White and I’m older than a lot of the people that we work with, and these are realities of a situation that I’m in, so I am very, very aware of the potential for power playing out, especially being a White person, and try to reduce that as much as possible. No matter whether it’s a White person or a person of color, we own our identity wherever we can. So I will very intentionally say, “As a 50 year old White woman, I...” Or, “In the skin that I am in, my perspective is...,” and we encourage others to do that as well so that people are invited to address that and know that it’s okay to talk about race in class and where we were raised. Those are factors at play. We have to say it’s okay to acknowledge it all.

We try to very actively, proactively, establish a sense of culture and trust knowing we’re bringing a lot of different kinds of people together and they may not feel safe together. We want to be really slow and sure and careful that we’re not losing anybody along the way or turning anybody off inadvertently. When we construct norms, we really construct them together. We don’t tell people what the norms are going to be. We make meaning together. For example, [with new teacher residents] instead of establishing norms and going into a norm construction exercise, we’ll first say, “What are norms? Do we have to have them? Have you ever set norms before in a class?” [We’re] bringing them along just as younger people and checking in with them a little bit more often. Often one of our articulated norms for any group work [will] be, “Remember, we’re all trying.” [We] name the fact that if we don’t take risks, we’re not going to grow. We even have an activity that we do with the new teacher residents whole group about
once a month. It’s called “The Screw Up Hall of Fame”. We just stand together and tell each other [in the] whole group about our screw ups in the last month.

[Inviting teacher residents to facilitate] is definitely something we could be doing more of, [but] it’s very difficult to pull them together for any kind of planning. We try to involve them actively but ask them for very little as far as extra time outside of the session for planning.

[Dialogue with teacher residents can be] very loosely facilitated or structured protocols. We use a lot of protocols actually, to help us through things. We use a “Making Meaning Protocol” [to look collaboratively at] an incident we’re all muddling over [or] the “Tuning Protocol” where we all help each other muddle over [individual challenges] together. We read articles and use text-based protocols. We’ve used a protocol which really teaches us to [examine multiple perspectives] so we’re all weighing in on a problem and very obviously owning our perspectives. We used something called a “Ping-Pong” protocol where ideas bounce around and we all have a chance to speak.

Sometimes we just switch gears completely and don’t follow the plan or follow it and make [adjustments]. [Other times] we’ll just try to facilitate to get through to it and follow up with people outside. We shouldn’t force anything too hard. It’s about transparency. [We might acknowledge] tension in the room [and say], “As a facilitation team we’re going to step aside and consult for a moment about what we ought to do.” A great strategy when there’s lot of emotions and tension like that is [the] “Turn and Talk” protocol. Each person has one minute to

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7 The Meaning Making Protocol is designed for participants to work collaboratively to examine a given text. http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/making_meaning.pdf

8 The Tuning Protocol is designed to guide collaborative reflection around problems of practice to help educators refine their work to support student achievement. One person shares their issue and the group asks a series of clarifying and probing questions to think together about the problem. https://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/tuning.pdf
say how [they’re] feeling and why [they’re] feeling that way and the other person can only listen. And then [they] get some of it off [their] chest and go back to what [we] were trying to do. We have a norm to accept non-closure and hold true to it when either time or conditions don’t allow us to tie it up with a neat bow. It’s messy. You walk away thinking, “Did I do the right thing?” And [there are] many situations in which I don’t know in the end whether we did the best thing to do because we are not experts in all of these realms. But I don’t think that’s a reason to not do it. We just try to get through it the best we can, knowing that it is better to be trying than to not try.

[During planning for facilitation], we try to figure out whether we should build in a little period where, if we’re talking about race for example, we take a few minutes or an hour to get together in race-alike affinity groups, [and] there are times that working within affinity helps us then be more prepared to do the work across difference that we need to do. We had a discussion group and, as it fell out pretty randomly, my discussion group was all-White. We were talking about one particular chapter [in a] a book called, So You Want to Talk about Race? [by Ijeoma Oluo]. There were people of color in every other discussion group and this one man in my group said, “I couldn’t read this book. I was raised Catholic. I deeply believe that all people are equal. I don’t understand why this Black person has to write a book like this trying to get people to understand that she is treated badly in society because racism does not exist anymore.” And he literally said, “It was around when there was slavery, but when slavery ended, that’s when that stuff ended and we don’t have a race problem in this country. And I just don’t get it. I don’t get when Black people complain about the way they’re treated. I think that they’re being lazy.”

My spine couldn’t have been tingling more. This was a whole group of people [whose] jaws were on the ground. I wasn’t the identified facilitator, but I had been trying to get the group
to get moving with their discussion. It was very clear that everybody else had really appreciated
the book and felt they had a lot of work to do to understand the role they play in contributing to
systems of oppression. Everybody in the group besides this guy definitely believed there are
great systems of racial oppression at play in this country. And so without saying it directly,
everybody just abandoned the discussion we were supposed to be having and gently shared their
reasoning for why they think White people need to read books like this. They ha[d] language for
how to talk about what they [were] seeing and [to] make meaning and figure out what to do. It
was pretty amazing to watch this group rally in this very compassionate way to help him open a
little bit more to the idea that because he [was] White and male, [that gave him] the ability to opt
into not seeing racism because it advantages him. If that comment. . . in the all-White group had
been made in a cross-race group, that would have had some unbelievable implications. It was
really powerful and I thought, “Okay, we know where we need to begin.”

I think people tend to follow the guidance of the leader. There’s a modeling component.
If the person who’s facilitating the conversation isn’t freaking out about that comment, [they] can
set a tone that helps keep the group open to being okay with the fact that he said these things. I
didn’t necessarily speak first in response, but when I spoke I tried to provide language that could
work for everybody in understanding what was going on. I felt like the situation was challenging
me to articulate my beliefs as the equity educator as I like to think of myself to be. It’s modeling
and gently pointing out connections between these practices to try to understand other’s
perspectives [and] a situation in which we want to use those skills.

Before we end, we always do some kind of debrief to reflect on the process of the
dialogue and our perceptions of the protocol as well as the content.
The Role of a Teacher Educator in Facilitating Critical Dialogue

I don’t want to think of myself as being a transformer. I think people have to transform themselves. When students manifest shame or guilt in conversations about race, I try to listen first. Just listen for understanding. I try to really think about how their experience must struggle in this situation and think about the ways in which we are alike. We’re both trying to get better at teaching, or being educators, or whatever we’re working on. I really try to focus on that in my dialogue with them so I don’t feel like I have this figured out and I’m coming in to save you; [it’s more that] I can really relate to you.

There’s this mindset that I try to hold when I’m talking to them. The reality of life is, life goes up and down. Everybody has good moments and bad moments, good days and bad days. And, if [you] see that reality, then when you are in a bad day, and you already really, truly believe that it is a reality, that there are good days and bad days, [then] you will automatically have the understanding that today is a bad day, but it’s not always going to be bad. [T]here’s a certain other reality that we try to help everybody embrace before a crisis sets in and that is that everybody has struggles. Everybody struggles. I think a lot of new teachers, when they are struggling they are exasperated by [feeling that] I’m the only one struggling, and it’s going to be like this forever. So, what we do is we try to really lay the groundwork ahead of time that it is not always going to be like this. We try to surface everybody’s struggles so that they can see over and over again, everybody is having a hard time. Then all you need to do in the moment of crisis is remind them of these things if they can’t remind themselves.

I want to be clear; I screw things up all the time. But I try to see that in context and not personalize it and think, therefore, I am an unworthy person. There have been plenty of years that [my practice] has been a place of shame. But, [because the] cognitively-based compassion training work that all of our team has been doing is about this stuff, I do feel like I’ve made a
great deal of progress. When I mess up, I may flirt with this idea of shame, but it usually takes
the form of guilt, which is more productive. Sometimes, it’s just embarrassment and like, “OO,
you better act quick and fix it.”

[For example, recently I was working with] a couple teacher residents who are teaching
in a very low-income school that has been historically the lowest performing school in [my
state], and it’s 100 percent non-White students. One teacher resident said about two teacher
residents [who were assigned to the school], “Oh, you’re just throwing them to the wolves,
huh?”. And to me, I guess I heard that these people who are low income and non-White are the
wolves. They’re going to eat you alive. They’re violent. They’re aggressive. They don’t
understand. I was angry. I was tense. This [was] somebody that I didn’t know well and the
relationship mattered going forward. I think there was definitely a fear, like, what am I going to
do? Am I going to say anything here? How am I going to say it? You can spin off and think of it
as really horrible.

I tend to just say what my emotion is; a lot of transparency seems to feel right as an
approach to me. I see it as my job to let them know how I heard that comment and that it doesn’t
feel comfortable to me. [I want to] invite them to come to the school and dispel these myths and
watch their language. I said, “I’m feeling uncomfortable with what was just said, and I don’t
know the right words for sharing why that makes me [uncomfortable], but I’m going to try. And
I’m not very good at hiding. I’m sweating and shaking so I don’t think there’s a lot of point in
trying to hide it. I’m trying to learn to practice talking about these things so I’m going to give it a
shot. Is that all right?”

I think she was embarrassed and self-conscious. She blushed. She said less in this context
after that, so she was probably in her head. Maybe she was a little angry, but I think it’s really
hard to know if people are in a place where, especially if you don’t know them well, where you can surface that kind of thing and have a relationship going forward.

I think it’s really dangerous to come trying to change other people. I think it often doesn’t work, and I think there are plenty of people that are trying to do it already, so what I try to do is be my best self in a conversation. And if that ends up changing the other person’s perspective or behavior in some way, then that’s the outcome. But, I don’t know that I feel I know enough or am a good enough person, or the right person, to decide how anybody else should be [or] to think that I have the right to transform them, how to transform them. I mean, at the same time, I’ll present my point-of-view about something. But, who am I to say you should transform?

Self-questioning is a critical thing to have some of, but you don’t want to have too much of it. It keeps me honest. It keeps me thinking about other people’s experiences. It keeps me focused on the right stuff, which is moving the group forward. It keeps me analytical and in a metacognitive state. I’m evaluating what I’m doing and looking at it from an objective perspective for effectiveness.

But at the same time, it can also play a role in slowing the work if I don’t have a lot of confidence. That often happens for people; their desire to do this work is rewarded by a lack of confidence in their ability to do the work. Even for the best of the best, it gets messy. I’m really realizing that [it requires] a great deal of humility and willingness or ability to see sometimes things just don’t go your way even when you put everything in place that you can for success. But, it doesn’t mean that you should stop the effort. Maybe if there’s one thing that a social justice educator needs to have in place, it’s an acceptance of that.
Paula

Introduction to Paula

At the time of this study, Paula was an Associate Professor of Education and elementary program coordinator at a private liberal arts and sciences university in the southern United States where she established her career as a teacher educator. Her teaching and research focus on self-study, elementary education practices, teacher preparation, and educational equity. Prior to entering higher education, Paula taught elementary school for several years. She initially entered her graduate studies in education with a plan to study education policy but realized early on that she was far more interested in the “intellectual work of teaching.” Paula describes her practice as deeply influenced by both transformational and curriculum theory.

To better understand the context in which Paula facilitates critical dialogue with her students, it is helpful to see a broader picture of the professional context that establishes the foundation for her practice. Although the surrounding community in which teachers complete their field experiences and clinical practice serves a diverse, urban Pk-12 student population, the private university in which Paula currently practices has a predominantly White student population (over 50%); approximately 20% of the nearly 2,500 students enrolled describe themselves as Hispanic. The elementary teacher education program reflects national demographic trends and is comprised largely of White, female teaching candidates. There are no male faculty members and only one female professor of color. Paula describes her department as one that claims to foreground equity as part of its mission and that continuously strives to support teacher candidates in examining the “practices that we hold that are perpetuating inequities”. However, she acknowledges the struggles the department faces when trying to enact equitable practices at the institutional level, especially around hiring practices that fail to
challenge the status quo and inadvertently reinforce the selection of White candidates for faculty positions.

Teaching candidates in her program can earn a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and teaching certification. Prerequisites for the master’s program include a bachelor’s degree in any subject and minor in education during which students take courses in child development and learning exceptionalities with a concentration in either ESL or Special Education, method courses, and two field experience. Summer coursework at the beginning of their program immediately engages students in a critical study of curriculum theory, history, and practice in secondary schools and an examination and analysis of teacher roles and practices in the creation of knowledge. During their master’s program, teacher candidates engage in clinical practice at an assigned professional development school four or five days a week in fall and spring respectively under the supervision of a mentor teacher. They attend evening classes with university professors and seminars designed to examine and reflect on their experiences in schools.

Within the Elementary program, Paula teaches master’s courses in literacy, curriculum and teaching inquiry in addition to supervising and leading seminars for undergraduate field experiences and graduate clinical practice. Her methods courses in reading and literacy emphasize practices in teaching diverse student populations and pedagogy and curriculum courses are designed support the examination experiences during clinical practice, specifically around the meaning and impact of pedagogical and curricular decisions on students.

Dialogue protocols, literacy strategies, and conversational strategies are embedded in the field experiences and field-based seminar required for the Minor and continue in coursework across the programs.
Paula’s Youth

I grew up in a White world. I was born outside of [a major, northern metropolitan city] in a White suburb. At age five, we moved like 60 miles northwest of [where I was born] to [the city] where my family still is. My neighborhood, my elementary school, my Presbyterian church, all the kids at the Y, everyone I interacted with felt White to me. We would go to the swimming pools and skating rinks and tennis lessons and all of that was very White. Everyone I saw on television was White. I just always expected to turn on the television and think I'm going to see White people. I remember watching Sanford and Son⁹ [once]. It felt like a bad dream in some ways, so beyond my own lived experience [that] I didn't know how to make sense of it. I don't feel like I had anyone in my growing up years who talked openly about race. And I would say that's including my own family. I felt like White bread; It's so bland and non-descript.

I've really thought hard about racialized incidents in my own life. One of them happened in third grade. I had an African-American teacher, which was really rare. She had just come to the school, and I fell in love with her. She had these big, dangly hoop earrings and she wore this really bright, beautiful lipstick. I thought she was just so special. I can remember taking the globe down with [a classmate] and we were playing a game where we would spin the globe and put our hand down and say the name of the country. We were really interacting with the globe, and I saw the name Niger in Africa. I think it was pretty conscious that I decided to say the N word [even though] I was pretty sure that that was not the way that you would pronounce it. Immediately, [my classmate] raised his hand, “Ms. R., Ms. R., [she] just said the N word!” I'll never forget that stricken look on her face [or] the relief spread across [it as I explained], “No,
No. It's the globe. It's this word right here.” But looking back on it, it pains me to think that I was so playful in experimenting with a racial epithet like that and not understanding the enormity of saying that.

It wasn't until I think in sixth grade our schools began to be desegregated. My very last year of elementary school, I can very distinctly remember kids of color being bussed in. And we probably had three African-American students in our classroom in sixth grade. It pains me to say this now [and] is very ugly to me, but I don't remember their names. I don't remember interacting with them. I don't think I even saw them.

[Throughout middle and high school], all my interactions [with students of color] felt threatening, or I just didn't understand. I thought that people of color were mean spirited and probably not as smart.

**Revelatory Moments on the Path to Facilitation**

I [originally] went to college in a [large, midwestern, metropolitan city]. [But] I wasn’t ready for the big city and I remember feeling really threatened [by] the “other”. I was so fearful I ended up going back home after my first semester [and] transferring to [a local college in close to my hometown to complete my undergraduate coursework in education]. I thought [teaching] would be fun and interesting and something that I felt capable of doing. In general, I saw myself living a life of service and saw teaching as service. I didn't really consider any other career. [After] I graduated [from my teacher certification program] I was very fortunate to be hired in a [mostly White], rural district that was maybe 10 miles outside of [my hometown].

[Early in my teaching career, I had a female student] who had African-American and White parents, and she was just so beautiful. She just was stunningly beautiful, and I remember she had this really lovely personality. It was easy to fall in love with her. At the first teacher conference and I just was gushing and gushing with her parents about how lovely she was and
she had this beautiful personality, she was so gracious, da-da-da-da. [But when they asked], “How is she doing academically?” I thought “How is she doing academically?” I didn't feel like I could speak for that. I [thought], “What is wrong with me?” I [hadn’t thought] about race in the classroom. I [hadn’t thought] about my own race and how it was impacting my practice or the curriculum I used or the interactions between kids and how I was supporting them. [I didn’t] have an understanding of racism and institutionalized racism and how schools are really designed to perpetuate the inequity that exists in our larger society, I didn't think about any of that. I'm embarrassed to say [teaching] just didn't feel very intellectually challenging to me, because I didn't really understand the intellectual work of teaching. That’s why, two years later, I joined the Peace Corps.

Going through the Peace Corps in [a third-world country] and thinking about teaching gave me a different lens. I was learning a lot about acculturation and assimilation and making sense of this as a White woman coming into a [country with a predominantly Black population], what did I really have to offer? Was I part of the problem or part of the solution? There was very open corporal punishment in the preschool where we were training, where kids would just get slapped across the face for I didn't even know why, and it was so hard not just to want to kill the teachers. How do you negotiate that when there are differences and when I'm also a guest but when I also feel like I want to be an advocate for children? That's when I think I first began grappling with [my beliefs] and [became] aware that I can't just assume that my own ways of being are everyone's ways of being.

When I was in the PhD program at [a large mid-western university], I don't really remember us talking about race or equity at all. [But] I remember an incident that was particularly painful that got me thinking harder about my own experience. We were in a grad
class and I worked with [two male peers], [one] was a Native American student and the three of us were chatting. I was laser focused on [the white peer] because he was sitting across from me, but apparently I had been completely unaware and even ignoring [the Native American peer] to the point where [the white peer] all of the sudden was like, “He is trying to talk. Let's give him a chance.” It like jolted me out of feeling completely unaware. What is it within me that would allow [me to act] like the only person to talk to was the white guy? That's been a growing edge for me in thinking about how to help future candidates gain that understanding.

**Facilitating Critical Dialogue**

In terms of my work with candidates, [my goal is to help them develop] that understanding of why race, and why we’re going there. That then means we first and foremost have to understand our own racial identity. We have to understand the racial identity of those who don’t look and sound like us, and we have to learn to value and appreciate the lived experience not just of ourselves. We really work on trying to understand at least the big [six] social identities…, learning that there are light and shadows to their identities. [We ask them to think about] how do their identities then impact their interactions with kids, their interactions with families, their instructional choices, what they choose to teach, how they teach it, how they discipline. Aren’t we learning how to advocate for valuing people’s lived experience and interrupt the systems that keep that from happening? I feel like part of my role is to hold space for us to engage in conversations that we don't often have, because a lot of my candidates are White, and they often are colorblind and color mute. Talking about issues of race inequity often just bring a lot of discomfort.

There’s work across difference and there’s work within affinity. I see some of my own mentor teachers out at the school who, as soon as they have a parent of color name anything that, “I think my child is being discriminated against or you’re treating my child unfairly,” they just
shut down. You know, “They’re calling me racist, da-da-da.” [But] if we all know that White people are inherently racist, we can get past that and hear someone and [be] curious to know more [be] deeply concern[ed and]. . . . want to understand where [they are] coming from. [That’s one reason why] I always prefer to co-facilitate with a person of color. We’re in the process if trying to hire someone [and] I’m hoping it’s a candidate of color so that we can work together to model reflective practices.

[Group norms or] agreements enable us to have [critical] conversations. For many years, on day two or day three of being together in summer school of the very first course [in our program], we would establish our own norms. I'm not doing that this year because [the Singleton and Linton] norms are too good. I used them for the full two weeks, and I have no desire to let them go anytime soon. [For] the first two weeks every morning we did something very explicit with them. [For example, one the first day they] go to the norm that [they’re] finding [they] have the most challenge [with] and then whoever is there with [them, they] write a haiku that [they] think would capture the essence of enacting that agreement. The next day, [they] create anti-skits [and answer the question], “What would it look like not to be holding ourselves to this agreement/” and then fold into [their] skit how [they] would act as an ally and address it. On day three, [they] write a recipe. What are the ingredients [they] need in order to knock this norm, and what do [they] do with them? It's then a much deeper dive into unpacking those agreements.

In our opening moves for every time we meet, we always start with [the] “Gratitude” [protocol]. Then we move to a round of “Connections”\textsuperscript{10}. Then we share out the reflections from

\textsuperscript{10} Gratitude is a warm-up activity during which participants share a specific, brief story about something for which they are grateful. Connections is designed to bring participants into the dialogue mindfully. Once Connections begins, participants sit in quiet reflection until they are compelled to share a thought or insight that connects them to their current work they are about to do www.schoolreforminitiative.org.
the last class. We review the agenda, and the last thing is always to review our norms. I never
start a class without making explicit reference to them, that we've agreed to do this with and for
each other to stay engaged, to speak our truths, to experience discomfort, to expect and accept
non-closure, to look for learning, and also to identify patterns in our own participation.

I feel like this is an area of growth for me. When we establish our own norms, I worry
that they are not explicitly designed to hold us in critical reflective dialogue. [For example],
some of [the students suggest norms] like, “Listen Attentively without Judging”. I hate that
because, of course, we're in the business of making sense, which involves judgement. I'm trying
to figure out that tension between using agreements that other people have generated that
explicitly create and hold that space for us to engage in difficult conversation versus saying
here's what I need in order to do my best learning.

[Protocols provide] structure for the conversation itself, because that creates that safety
net where people feel like there is a predictable sense of how the conversation might go, even if
they don’t know what the conversation is [or] where it will lead us, but at least some sense of
what is being asked of us to engage in it. I use [the “Equity Stances” protocol11] to try to help
people ferret out how are they defining equity for themselves. Is it equity of opportunity? Is it
equity of outcome? There isn’t really necessarily a right answer. I grapple with that. In terms of
their work in schools, we use the “Tuning Protocol” a fair bit. We use them in the spring
semester to help them think about naming the skin that they’re in so that it’s giving us
permission to think about whether and how their identities are embedded in the work that they’ve
produced and what are the advantages and disadvantages to that.

11 The Equity Stances protocol was developed by the Southern Maine Partnership as a tool for educators to engage
identity equity stance and examine it through a complex series of text-based small-group dialogue activities.
http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/equity_stances.pdf
I [also use] constructivists listening dyads and triads. I’m often pretty explicit before they get into one about what it is and what it isn’t. Even if we’ve done them a lot of times, I remind them [what] listening this means and ask them to really pay attention to when their minds start to fill in the blank. We think about our body language. I ask them to sit with the discomfort [of] even just looking at the floor instead of at the person and see what’s that like. Did it change their ability to listen? Did it impact the person that was speaking? [Silence is] a different way of being respectful and responsive to someone sharing their story. I’ve now started to follow-up in a triad, one person goes and they sit for a minute in silence. Another person [speaks] and they sit for a minute in silence. The third person [speaks] and they sit for a minute in silence to honor sitting with what they heard. Then they can talk across what they heard before we come back and debrief the content and or the process so that they don’t become mired there. It’s a mindfulness practice where you keep coming back to only listening to what is being said.

One of the things that I try to look for is dialogue across students when they can actually talk earnestly to each other [and] I don’t have to play much of a role. I feel like—and this is true of the school as well because we don’t usually engage in these kind of conversations about race and equity—we don’t have a lot of practice. We typically look to the teacher to gauge whether or not we’re on the right track. Initially, people talk to me and not make eye contact with everyone else. I’ll always interrupt that and say, “It makes me uncomfortable. We’re a community. We’re talking to each other.” I deputize myself to playfully do that in the conversation [until] it no longer happens, then I know that they feel that training wheels are off. They’re moving from instrumental learning where they want the right answer, [and affirmation] to letting the conversation go where it goes without me needing to so directly direct it.
An aspect of my practice that I really needed to work on is [providing opportunities for students to facilitate]. Part of it is because in terms of details and organization, if I think about it up front, I can extend and share the responsibility, but usually I'm flying in just barely having enough time to get myself together. Then it doesn't create space for others, so I'm really working on doing that more this year. It's great.

This year I've also started to be much more explicit about the emotional work that's involved in this equity work. As teachers and even as teacher candidates, we treat schooling and teaching as intellectual work. And there's just not a lot of space for feeling in our practice. People have been harmed so much by the injustices that they've experienced, and when you start talking about those, that brings up a lot. It’s mostly White candidates who feel that sense of guilt. I empathize and talk about how it paralyzed me for a long time myself. Though I know I have biases and prejudices, I am part of a larger set of institutions that are designed to maintain that privilege. It’s about drawing from the overwhelming sense of personal responsibility to help them see the larger societal picture.

I've tried to be much more explicit in normalizing [emotion] and holding space for people to feel things. There's a difference between feeling an emotion, coping with an emotion, expressing an emotion, and healing from an emotion. And all of those require different strategies, and they have different hoped–for outcomes or purposes to get us to raise our own emotional literacy and understand its relationship to this work and being very explicit. So, [if you observed my class, you] would see me trying to let people sit with their discomfort and not try to save it or gloss over it.

I try to use a lot of storytelling from my own lived experience. So you might hear me sharing stories that deliberately make myself vulnerable. I talk a lot about my past experience,
but also about my current challenges in understanding my own biases and also sometimes my facilitations.

I showed a video that is very hard for me--I always cry when I watch it; it literally takes my breath away. We'll stop and do breathing exercises together. I might ask them, “Would it be helpful if we just take a moment to focus on a breath?” They always say yes. We get into a different posture, close their eyes if they're willing, and take a moment to try to find the breath and to use it to re-center. We also make a lot of reference to “Zones of Comfort, Growth, and Danger”\textsuperscript{12} to notice where we are, what it is we need for ourselves, what others need, because we can be in different places in the same conversation. Humility and humor every once in a while [also] defuses things.

I've been influenced by Ali Michael who talks about the importance of tracking when you're facilitating these conversations. [When I am] tracking internally, [I] pay really close attention to my own physical sensations in my body, [for example] when do I feel my own stomach clenching? When do I feel like oh crap, how did we get here?, [to identify when] I’m feeling some discomfort here, and I'm try to ask myself why. Then [I] might think aloud [and] ask what other people feel about that as an invitation but also as a way to name what I imagine some other people might be feeling.

It's also externally tracking [what] I've noticed [in the dialogue]. [For example,] I wonder [aloud when] I'm noticing that, every time we start a conversation, there are three people who always step up first. What are other people making of my inquiry? It has taken me a long time to move from judgement and irritation to saying, “Huh. I'm noticing something. And what do we

\textsuperscript{12} Zones of Comfort, Growth, and Danger is a protocol developed by the School Reform Initiative to support participants in identifying areas of their personal and professional lives where they experience these responses. This activity is an introduction to exploring emotional responses in various spaces to develop strategies for navigating those in which they are more challenged or threatened.
make of it?” Now I try to use language that keep[s] my own judgement in check and invite[s] more inquiry.

If it feels like there’s tension in the room that’s escalating, sometimes I’ll change my tone and rate of voice. I’ll talk much more quietly to use my voice as trigger for moving in a downward, more calm direction than an upward direction. [I speak] a little bit slower so that I’m making sure I’m really choosing my words with care and I’m emphasizing the things that you know that I really want to emphasize. I also give a little bit of space for people to get in touch with wherever it is [and] turn a little inward or move to reflective journaling. I’ll pose a question that I might make up in the moment and put it on the board and then let people do some writing, because if you feel like you’re not being heard, that creates a different kind of hurt, so at the very least we can be an audience for ourselves. I might send them off on a walk-about so that they’re physically getting out of the space, and that can sometimes clear the energy a little, and they’re only trying to hear one other voice or perspective. Then, when they come back [I] create a little structure [for them to] report out one thing that stood out to [them] from [their] dialogue.

[We do] a lot of debriefing afterwards, after we’ve had a courageous conversation. We use Glenn Singleton’s Racial Compass Point\textsuperscript{13} a lot. That also becomes some kind of shared language. Where did you mostly find yourself and which quadrant? The moral, the social, the intellectual, or the emotional? I [also] rely a lot on their written reflections. I have [my own] four quadrants: what I value, what I learned, what I need and what I’ll do as a result of today. And that also provides me some insights into how they were individually experiencing our work.

\textsuperscript{13} What she refers to here as Racial Compass Point is actually called The Courageous Conversation Compass. This activity was developed by Singleton (2015) to help participants better understand the ways they navigate their “emotional, intellectual, moral and relational” responses to racial experiences (p. 29-30). https://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/courageous-conversations-compass/
together. Through the debrief . . . I might say, “What evidence do we have that we were living and embodying our agreements?” And if they have evidence of that I’ll feel like that’s a success.

**The Role of a Teacher Educator in Facilitating Critical Dialogue**

I feel like my own story is a big illustration of decades of White fragility. So empathizing and being public about my own lived experiences has been an important tool. So has naming what White fragility is and really studying it as a phenomenon. It helps people understand, you’re not alone. And this is the hard part for me, [to avoid judgment]. You think this is harmful? You think this is hard? Try living in a person’s shoes who dies by a thousand cuts because of the daily microaggressions they encounter that are just constant, continuous, cumulative. That’s the tension.

[I have been] thinking a lot about how I, as a White person, and working with a White male administrator, how consciously aware am I [of] my inherent willingness to go along [with the White racial status quo]. [H]ow explicit am I with students that that might be happening? [During critical dialogues, am I] always deeply aware of my own Whiteness? Or is it that I haven’t developed that consciousness to be aware of it in the moment? I’m trying to think about that. I deliberately want to encourage them to be thinking much more consciously about how the skin that I’m in is reinforcing the system that they’ve been indoctrinated into and how they can interrupt that.

It’s painful to admit [but] I’ve got a great example [that] happened about four years ago. [My colleague, Sara, and I] were in the middle of [discussing] some piece [we had read] and the students started talking about stereotypes. I thought it would be important for us to try to create a structure to surface our assumptions about different racial groups. And I said, “Let’s take a quick break. I’m gonna check in with Sara to see whether or not this hairbrained idea made sense.” And then I’m like, “Sara, I really feel like this group is safe enough where we could raise up
what do they think about when they think about Hispanics, Blacks, Asians, . . . I’m sorry what was another big group?” And she goes, “And White people.” We literally had just been reading about this and yet what I named were groups of color, not White. Holy shit! Of course to be White is to have a race!

I really do stumble all the time [and my] Whiteness [and my] assumptions are taken for granted. So when we came back I made that [exchange] explicit to the group. I realized what I don’t know I don’t know, and here is how I figure it out. It’s always humbling for me personally, but I also want to make that public.

I have a lot of those [moments]. When I’m just starting out doing something, I am laser focused on what I’m doing and not so much about, am I really thinking about all of the students in my classroom. When [we] read Ali Michael's book, I usually bring in several different examples of White identity continua [from the] Helms’ model. It didn't occur to me for a good year [that I had] other people than White kids in [my] classes. Why [wasn’t I] bringing in the Black model? Why [wasn’t I] bringing in the Latino model? Why [wasn’t I] bringing in the bi-racial model? I think it was one of my Black students [who said], “This is incredibly interesting and it's giving me insight into White people. It's certainly not giving me insight into myself.” It was one of those Duh! moments.

[I am] learning how to be more cognizant of the mental tapes that go on, like “You suck at this” or “That was ridiculous. How could you have let that happen?”, and to turn that voice off then [replace it with] “You’re a learner, you’re a human, we all fall short. I’m sorry you have to take off your super human cape, but you haven’t reached super human status yet, [Paula]. . . to

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14 Helms’ (1995) model of White racial identity development outlines six ego statuses through which White individuals move as they become aware of racism and understand the role of race in their perceptions of the themselves and the world. Each status includes Information Processing Strategies individuals employ to manage their attitudes, behaviors, and feelings about race and race-related experiences.
engage in a strategy that will help me do more than just give lip service. One [strategy is] to engage in more self-compassion because I know that I hold myself to really high standards, and I get irritated with myself when I fall short of what I’m hoping to do. And so I’ve really been trying to work on acknowledging that I’m human and, that in the same way that I expect my students to look for learning, that this is an opportunity for me to look for learning. Rather than to berate myself to celebrate that this is the next step in where I need to go better equip myself to facilitate these kind of dialogues.

[As a facilitator working with teacher candidates, the most important thing to keep at the forefront of my practice] is to have a stance of appreciation, not judgment. [But this is] often a stretch for me. I really worked hard to try to find something that I could truly value and appreciate in an authentic way. I’m sure [the student who reacted so strongly to the book project] struggled to do that with me, I think I struggled to do that with her. I didn’t unravel it as hard as I tried, all year. This is hard, hard work, and I used to just get mad when it got ugly, or I’d [think], “Seriously, you think that?” But now I [think], “Oh, how interesting you think that”. I might’ve thought that way myself in the past, and I can appreciate now. [I] appreciate people being willing to risk speaking their truth, that’s big in and of itself. The more I can keep myself from going to that place of, “Are you kidding me?”, the more I feel like I can work with that person to help them consider whether or not they want to keep thinking that way. I can remain fully present, evaluating and appreciating, and seeing how everything that gets uttered is a clue for what I can do over time to help them on their own journey.

Summary

This chapter provided the profile of each of the participants to reveal their perceptions of the facilitation of critical dialogue around issues of race. For each profile, I provided a description of the current programs and courses in which the individual teacher educator engages
with their students in dialogue to situate their facilitation experience. Following each description of context, I presented the participant’s narrative profile in their own words to reveal their perception of their facilitation practice.

In Chapters 5, I present the dominant themes that occurred across participants to name the essence of their pedagogy distilled from their commonalities. Chapter 5 provides a structural description of the experiences shared by all three teacher educators as they planned for, engaged in, and grappled with tensions during facilitation and outlines a framework for a Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about race.
CHAPTER 5
LOOKING ACROSS THE TEACHER EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES: A PEDAGOGY OF CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUE ABOUT RACE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how teacher educators make sense of their experiences facilitating critical dialogues about race in order to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy. I employed qualitative research methods to explore teacher educators’ perceptions of their facilitation to better understand how they conceptualize a pedagogy of critical dialogue about race, racial equity, and social justice, and more specifically their perception of their operationalization of a pedagogy of critical dialogue to develop the critical social justice literacy of teacher candidates. As such, this study sought to make sense of how these teacher educators planned for, facilitated, and grappled with challenges to facilitating critical dialogue focused on these issues. The overall aim of this study was to capture the essence of teacher educators’ experiences of their practice in order to contribute to the scholarly literature in teacher education about a pedagogy of critical race dialogue and to learn more about dialogue as a practice when the intention is to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy.

In Chapter 4, I presented each participant’s narrative profile to convey in their own words the ways that teacher educators experienced the facilitation of critical dialogue. Narrative profiles were presented as stand-alone stories in order to center the focus on the voice of each as an individual (Seidman, 2012). In this chapter, I share a detailed analysis of the data across the three participants to better understand the teacher educators’ experiences of facilitating critical dialogue to develop the critical social justice literacy of teacher candidates. Broad themes and subthemes emerged “as connective threads” (Seidman, 2012, p.131) across the data and formed an emergent theory of a Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race. The three
overarching themes, summarized in Figure 5.1, were: planning for facilitation, enacting and reacting during facilitation, and reading the self. In this chapter, I discuss each of these three pedagogical practices, referring back to salient excerpts presented in the narrative profiles to illustrate each across Amanda, Erin, and Paula.

### Figure 5-1. Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race

#### Planning

Preparation and framing CSJD-R prior to discussion

- Seeking collaborative partnerships with diverse faculty
- Designing group structures
- Selecting protocols

#### Enacting & Reacting

Shaping CSJD-R as they unfold within a class

- Establishing group norms
- Modeling critical social justice literacy
- Reading the room
- Debriefing the process and the content

#### Reading the Self

Navigating felt-tensions as White teacher educators

- Monitoring Thoughts
- Tending to Feelings

### Planning for Facilitation

The first component, planning for facilitation, is defined as preparing for and framing Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race (CSJD-R) prior to discussion. For these participants, preparing to facilitate CSJD-R began well before a school year, a semester, or a course began and established a foundation for facilitation. The practices that fall in the category of “Planning”
include: (1) Seeking Collaborative Partnerships with Diverse Faculty, (2) Designing Group Structures, and (3) Selecting Protocols.

**Seeking Collaborative Partnerships with Diverse Faculty**

All three participants acknowledged that their curricular and pedagogical decisions were influenced by their limited perception of the world as White women. In addition, they anticipated that their lack of racial or cultural knowledge or implicit bias could impact the way they made sense of their work as well as their interactions with others, and therefore intentionally collaborated with educators of color to evaluate their planning decisions from a multi-racial perspective. For example, as a White woman with an immigrant, dual-cultural background, Amanda was aware that her race may impact her interactions with students as they engage in dialogue with the facilitator, their peers, or themselves. Amanda stated that she intentionally sought opportunities to co-facilitate with a Hispanic faculty member to model “for my own students what their voice could be” (2.29.21):

One thing that I intentionally do is co-teach with a woman of color. We’re always talking very openly and frequently about our students in the classes that [I] have, and there are times where we say, “You know, this has to come from you. I think this is where our students need to hear from a Latina around this thing.” Or sometimes she’ll say, “You’ve got to say it,” because we know that we can say the same thing and to different students, it comes out differently. (2.29.28-30)

For Amanda, part of planning for CSJD-R meant including racially diverse perspectives to amplify traditionally marginalized voices. Co-facilitation provided a structure for honoring multiple perspectives and made way for non-dominant voices to enter the dialogue.

In a similar fashion, Erin acknowledged the importance of diversity on the facilitation team so that they “don’t inadvertently dismiss anybody of any culture;” (2.6.1-2). She explained:

It will never be an all-White facilitation team. We always try to have a team across racial difference do the planning also. . . (2.5.25-26). Pointing out, [for example] maybe you don’t realize this, but that article you’re talking about
Deliberately planning and facilitating with people of color brought multiple perspectives to Erin’s lens as a White woman which prompted her to examine planning decisions and unearth oppressive patterns in her practice that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Like Erin, Paula planned for CSJD-R included critically examining her Whiteness and the impact of her race on her participation in the dialogue with her students. However, although Paula described a desire to co-facilitate with a person of color to “model reflective practices” (2.19.32) for her students, a lack of institutional diversity limited her opportunities for co-facilitation. As a result, Paula actively sought relationships outside of the university to include racially diverse perspectives in facilitating CSJD-R.

For these teacher educators, the physical presence of facilitators from traditionally oppressed groups provided representation by individuals who may offer counternarratives and a deeper understanding of the experiences of these groups (hooks, 2014; Quaye, 2012; Zúñiga, Nagada, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). Therefore, they intentionally collaborated with partners of color in order to have, as Erin described, “different people in the room with their eyes on all of that” (2.6.11).

**Designing Group Structures**

In addition to planning with racially diverse faculty, all three teacher educators designed small group structures for engaging in CSJD-R. They described group organization as instrumental in creating a community of learners who are able to talk, listen, and learn across difference. In planning for facilitation, race was of significant importance when designing groupings. They perceived the racial composition of a group as having the potential to foster or suffocate teacher candidate voice in dialogue. Decisions around racial affinity or cross-racial
groups were driven by factors like the group’s prior experience or preparedness to examine issues of race and issues of power and trust within the learning community.

As Amanda explained, while students of color sometimes struggled to “find their way in” (2.10.24) to dialogue in cross-affinity groups, White teacher candidates more frequently expressed feelings of “intimidation” or “trepidation” (2.10.43) when asked to engage in CSJD-R with non-White peers. Affinity groups, on the other hand, provided a space for race-alike participants to examine their perspectives with others who may have similar lived-experiences:

We do have one place in class where we have affinity groups because a conversation happens in the affinity group that sometimes creates more openings for the cross-cultural groups to happen as well. It’s important that we start there sometimes and give them recognition. Listening and learning across difference can happen, but it does require a community of practice, a community of learners. (2.23.18-22).

Amanda recognized the role that perceptions of power and comfort played in her students’ willingness to engage in CSJD-R. To address these dynamics, Amanda designed small groups that provided space for teacher candidates to try on ideas with students of the same race.

Erin reiterated the sentiment that affinity groups provided an opportunity for teacher candidates to wade into the murky waters of critical racial dialogue. As a component of planning, Erin and her facilitation team considered students’ preparedness to enter complex racial dialogues and designed affinity groups to scaffold the development of teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy:

If we’re talking about race we try to figure out whether we should build in a little period to get together race-alike affinity groups. There are times that working within affinity help us then be more prepared to do the work across difference that we need to do. (2.21.15-16).

For all three participants, working across difference was an important reason to also plan cross-affinity small groups for dialogue. In particular, Paula perceived interactions across racial groups as instrumental in challenging White teacher candidates to practice managing feelings of
defensiveness and White fragility. Furthermore, opportunities to talk across racial groups helped White teacher candidates develop their empathy for and understanding of others’ perspectives:

There’s work across difference and there’s work within affinity. And so, is that person comfortable, competent, and confident to speak across difference? That’s a big thing for me. I see some of my own [White] mentor teachers out at the school who, as soon as they have a parent of color name anything [like], “I think my child is being discriminated against or you’re treating my child unfairly,” they just shut down. You know, “They’re calling me racist, da-da-da.” [But] if we all know that White people are inherently racist, we can get past that and hear someone and [be] curious to know more, [be] deeply concerned, and want to understand where [they are] coming from. (2.27.31-34)

Whether creating affinity or cross-affinity groups, Amanda, Erin, and Paula worked to design group structures to help teacher candidates feel, as Erin stated, “called in” to the dialogue rather than “called out” or shamed for something they said (3.10.25-26). For these teacher educators, the grouping of students in particular ways for discussion intentionally created a space where participants were able to, as both Paula and Erin said, “sit with” and “sit in” the dialogue. This did not mean that the environment was designed to preclude conflict. Rather, these group structures were intended to provide “integrity in grappling with difficult material” (hooks, 2014, p.154) as students learned to confront their assumptions and feelings of discomfort.

Yet, when constructing affinity or cross-affinity groupings, it is interesting to note that all three participants justified the creation of these groups mostly from the perspective of their White teacher candidates. Amanda and Erin spoke of placing their White teacher candidates in affinity groups so they could explore their perceptions of race and racism in a non-threatening environment. Paula spoke of placing her White teacher candidates in cross-affinity groups to challenge them when their ideas about race and racism might be confronted by teacher candidates of color during dialogue. None of the participants specifically addressed the impact these confrontations might have on their teacher candidates of color. Although the experiential knowledge of students of color can serve as valuable counternarratives to the dominant norms
that persist in classroom spaces (Ladson-Billings, 1998), for students of color, confrontations in cross-racial groups can create pressure for participants of color to “teach” White people about their experiences (Lambertz-Berndt, 2016; Tatum, 1997). While all three teacher educators perceived the ability to talk across racial groups as an element of critical social justice literacy they hoped to help develop in teacher candidates, these experiences can silence traditionally marginalized students and reinforce oppressive structures that further isolate them (Lambertz-Berndt, 2016). This is an example of the ways Amanda, Erin and Paula’s whiteness inadvertently shaped their thinking during planning. Fortunately, as White teacher educators, they also had the foresight to select protocols as a pedagogical strategy, a strategy specifically designed to give every participant, regardless of race, a voice in dialogue.

Selecting Protocols

A third dimension of planning for facilitation discussed by all three participants was the selection of protocols. Protocols are defined as “a series of timed-steps for how a conversation among educators on a chosen topic will develop” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016. p.5). McDonald Mohr, Dichter and McDonald (2003) explain the importance of protocols by noting that the kind of talking needed among educators who wish to enact change “cannot rise spontaneously and unaided from just talking. It needs to be carefully planned and scaffolded” (p. 4). Amanda, Erin, and Paula all embraced the need to carefully plan and scaffold discussions about race by intentionally and thoughtfully selecting different protocols to target the development of various aspects of critical social justice literacy in the teacher candidates with whom they worked.

For example, during the first field-based course that aligned with her students’ practicum, Amanda selected the “4 A’s” protocol as an opening activity to examine issues of power. The “4 A’s” protocol begins with a pre-reading of a selected text, during which time participants
highlight passages that they wish to agree with, argue with, and aspire to as well as passages that reveal assumptions the author is making. Participants bring their highlighted passages to class and in small groups participate in four rounds, where each person shares one of their selected passages in response to the questions: 1) What do you Agree with in the text?, 2) What do you want to Argue with in the text?, 3) What Assumptions does the author of the text hold?, and 4) What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to (or Act upon)? The protocol ends with an open whole class debrief around a question such as: What did your small group discussion of the “4 A’s” reveal about the reading and what does this mean for our work with students?

Amanda selected this protocol to examine a section from the very first book read in one of her classes, Beverly Tatum’s *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?*. Through selecting this protocol to discuss the text, she hoped the protocol would develop teacher candidates’ skills in critically examining the intersections between teachers’ selection of curriculum materials, the materials themselves, and the ways students experience them:

That’s a point of power to be picking the curriculum. I want them to be able to articulate, “I think you picked this for these reasons,” or… “The author is trying to say this and I think that’s what you’re trying to tell us.” (3.15.43-47)

Amanda selected this protocol because she wants the teacher candidates “to know that the author has assumptions . . . and that [she has] assumptions when [she] select[s] something they are interacting with” (3.15.31-34). Examining the assumptions held by the selector and author of curriculum materials reveals the power inherent in curriculum choice, a power that often is not apparent to teacher candidates. Critical social justice teachers must understand that all curricula “bear the imprint of power” (Kincheloe, 2011, p.249). Hence, for Amanda, the “4 A’s” protocol plays a purposeful role in structuring the CSJD-R in her class to reveal this aspect of power to the teacher candidates.
Similarly, Erin intentionally selected the “Multiple Perspectives” protocol to help teacher candidates name their perspectives to unearth various points of view and to illuminate the ways their perspectives shape their participation in dialogue as well as their own teaching. To begin this protocol, participants introduce themselves with their name and a description of their perspective. Perspective might include any broad category of identifying one’s point of view related to the purpose of the class or group. For example, a teacher candidate might introduce themselves in this protocol as “a White, cisgender female, elementary education student who is committed to a life-long effort to pursue equity in education”. Next, the facilitator introduces a question and the participants write silently for several minutes in response. Writing is followed by two rounds of sharing during which each participant briefly names their perspective and then explains their initial thinking about the question. In a final round, after hearing the perspectives of all others in the group, participants reflect on what they noticed about the differences between the first two rounds.

Erin used this protocol during whole-group dialogue with a small cohort of new teacher candidates in her teacher residency program to “very clearly, obviously, own our perspective, which is a constant reminder that [one’s] perspective is not the only perspective” (2.22.33-35). Through selecting this protocol to discuss the text, she hoped to develop teacher candidates’ skills in naming their perspective and acknowledging that one’s point of view can impact their perspective. Critical social justice teachers must understand that their perspectives are impacted by their social location or positionality “within a particular culture in a particular time and place” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015, p.57). Bringing “these norms, these ethical and moral assumptions, these visions to the light of day so they can be analyzed and discussed” (Kincheloe, 2011, p.234) unearths cultural forces that shape teacher candidates’ positionality. Therefore, Erin selected the
“Multiple Perspectives” protocol to structure CSJD-R to introduce her teacher candidates to this facet of positionality.

In another example, Paula described intentionally selecting the “Equity Stances” protocol to help teacher candidates develop a shared vocabulary for engaging in antiracist teaching practices and unpack definitions of terms they used engage in CSJD-R. The purpose of the “Equity Stances” protocol is to deepen participants’ understanding of the work of equity as it relates to education and to work collaboratively to challenge their existing beliefs and assumptions regarding equity in student learning. This 90-minute protocol includes a complex series of activities that begins with participants’ reading descriptions of five different stances on equity and student learning and selecting the stance that most closely resembles their own. After reading about the different stances, participants are given a series of scenarios and accompanying questions that align with each of the equity stances to practice silently thinking and writing about examples of inequities in schools. Next, they are divided into small groups to engage in a text-based discussion around the guiding question “What do you believe schools should do regarding equity in student learning?” and then remain in those groups to identify and share a passage in the text that connects to their work. The protocol ends with a whole-group debrief that includes opportunities for participants to ask remaining questions or share reflections on the protocol.

In her work with teacher candidates, Paula explained that the “Equity Stances” protocol provided an opportunity for teacher candidates early in their program to develop a shared vocabulary for engaging in dialogue about race and equity. This structure guided teacher candidates through real-world scenarios designed to help them identify and narrow commonly-used terms in order to demystify the language of racism:

I use [the “Equity Stances” protocol] to try to help people ferret out how are they defining equity for themselves. Is it equity of opportunity? Is it equity of
outcome? There isn’t really necessarily a right answer. I grapple with that, too. (2.20.30-36).

For Paula, part of her role as a teacher educator was to prepare teacher candidates to move from “instrumental learning where they want the right answer” and affirmation from the teacher, to engaging in dialogue about race as members in part of a larger learning community (2.36.17). Unpacking what teacher candidates mean by the terms they use in discussion reveals that they “hold power to produce their own knowledges,” (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 206). Critical social justice teachers believe that “knowledge is not static” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 481); it is “socially constructed” and as such “is reflective of the values and interests of those who produce it” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015, p. 7). Hence, Paula selected the “Equity Stances” protocol as a structure for CSDJ-R to reveal this intersection between power, positionality, and knowledge to her teacher candidates.

In addition to the three individual examples of protocol selection above, all three participants referred to the selection of three particular protocols - the “Consultancy Protocol¹,” “Peeling the Onion²”, and the “Tuning Protocol” - to provide a structure for teacher candidates to collaboratively examine dilemmas through an equity lens that occurred in teacher candidates’ work in K-12 schools to enact change. The fundamental steps for engaging in each protocol are similar: 1) Each protocol begins with a teacher candidate’s presentation of a dilemma that emerged in their field experiences to a small group of peers; 2) Group members ask clarifying, informational questions of the presenter to better understand matters of fact; 3) Group members

¹ The Consultancy Protocol is used “to develop participants’ capacity to see and describe problems of practice through a structured series of guiding questions. Once they clearly define their dilemma, they work with the group to analyze it to help the presenter reflect on the problem.” [link]

² If presenters are already skilled at describing their dilemma, the facilitator may select Peeling the Onion Protocol to look more deeply at the underlying layers of a problem of practice to unearth hidden issues. [link]
ask probing questions of one another while the presenter of the dilemma listens; 4) The presenter offers reflections on the group’s feedback; and 5) All participants debrief the protocol.

All three participants noted how this group of protocols helped teacher candidates practice to “stop and peel back complexities to unravel...what is happening [and] all that is operating” (3.21.14-18) in their field experiences. For example, Amanda stated that this interplay between experience and dialogue made abstract concepts like racism and oppression tangible for teacher candidates to become agents of change. She believed this because:

There is a hesitation once you’ve recognized [racist practices in schools] to respond to the inequity that either is taking place or that you realize you’re participating in or perpetuating and then figuring out, “What will I do to address this situation both within the moment, but [also] working the larger sense around reinventing schools and systems that are more equitable”. (3.20.19-25)

Amanda, Erin, and Paula selected either the “Consultancy”, “Peeling the Onion”, or the “Tuning Protocol” to identify, describe, and examine teacher candidates’ practice within field placements through a lens of race and equity and then to “redress inequity in the long term...” (Gorski, 2016, p.225). Critical social justice teachers must understand that it is only though praxis - the relationship between critical thought and critical action - that critical social justice teachers disrupt inequitable practices (Freire, 1970). It is for this reason that all three teacher educators selected from this group of protocols in structuring CSJD-R to “strike a balance between reflection and action” (hooks, 2014) with teacher candidates as they collectively examined problems of practice in their field experiences and developed a call to action.

In fact, Amanda, Erin, and Paula believed so strongly in the benefits of protocols, they all strove to prepare their teacher candidates as facilitators of CSJD-R by building facilitation opportunities for teacher candidates into their course or program schedule. Amanda described planning with faculty across the program to design activities to prepare teacher candidates for facilitation roles and earmarked time for student facilitation because “everybody’s expected to be
a facilitator at some point” (2.13.4). This reflected the importance she ascribed to preparing teacher candidates to take responsibility for examining their own practice once they are in their own classrooms.

However, this did not come without its challenges. Unlike Amanda, Erin and Paula struggled during their planning to envision a space during the course to devote time for teacher candidates to facilitate. Although they believed facilitation opportunities would develop teacher candidate autonomy to eventually enact CSJD-R in their own classrooms or with colleagues, they both indicated that carving out time outside of class to do the preparatory work for student facilitation was an area of growth for them in their practice and something Erin wanted to “do more of.” As Erin explained, “it’s very difficult to pull them together for any kind of planning [before class]” (2.6.45). Paula expressed a desire to include teacher candidates more regularly in facilitation but needed to prioritize her planning time to “think about it up front” (2.14.36). She often felt challenged to make space for planning and preparing to teach but had made changes this year to allocate time in class for teacher candidates to facilitate routine protocols as a stepping-stone to changing the way she approached planning for more independent student-facilitation.

In sum, as illustrated in this section, the selection of protocols to shape teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy for very particular reasons was a critical part of planning for all three teacher educators. Protocols were selected to, as Amanda said, “honor the multiple ways in which people come in” to CSJD-R and guide teacher candidates with little or no experience to recognize how they could agree with and argue multiple perspectives (2.23.3-4). For Paula, protocols provided a “structure for the conversation itself” and “a way to slow down and to look really carefully at what’s going on and make sense themselves and with other
people” (2.6.15-16). Erin’s description that protocols simply “help[ed] us through things” (2.22.11) provides perhaps the most apt portrayal of the value these teacher educators placed on planning facilitation to guide teacher candidates through CSJD-R. Once protocols were carefully selected and group structure decided upon in collaboration with faculty of color, Amanda, Paula and Erin were ready to initiate CSJD-R in their classes.

**Enacting and Reacting During Facilitation**

No matter how much planning was done by these three teacher educators, actualizing their plan was often wrought with emotional and intellectual resistance from teacher candidates. In anticipation of these tensions, Amanda, Erin, and Paula put particular strategies in place to maintain the integrity of CSJD-R. The second component of a Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race, enacting and reacting, is defined as shaping CSJD-R as it unfolds in class. In addition to the “how” of facilitation, the experiences of these teacher educators provided insight into the “why” of their facilitation strategies and the in-the-moment adjustments they made during facilitation as they noticed and responded to student behaviors. These concrete strategies for facilitation were actualized in four ways by Amanda, Erin, and Paula: (a) Establishing Group Norms, (b) Modeling Critical Social Justice Literacy, (c) Reading the Room, and (d) Debriefing the Process and the Content.

**Establishing Group Norms**

Across all three participants, the first step in preparing the group to engage in CSJD-R, establishing group norms, occurred in class to, as Paula described, “create that safety net for us to have the difficult conversations” (2.11.39). Group norms are defined as an agreed-upon set of behaviors or dispositions meant to provide a framework for participants to share ideas respectfully, interact cooperatively, and critically examine an issue or topic. Establishing group norms was perceived as instrumental in creating an environment that could support these teacher
educators in navigating the challenges that arose during critical dialogue. Although all three teacher educators adhered to the notion of norms, they varied in their approaches to establishing them for or with teacher candidates in their classes.

Both Amanda and Paula established norms for teacher candidates by providing a list of commonly-used norms outlined by education authors Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton (2006) in *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Education*. These norms, called the Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations, are designed to create a shared commitment to engaging in dialogue about race. They include a commitment by participants to 1) stay engaged, 2) experience discomfort, 3) speak your truth, and 4) expect and accept non-closure. At the beginning of her courses, Amanda introduced the Four Agreements prior to engaging in CSJD-R to provide boundaries for behaviors and expectations during the dialogue. Amanda displayed them on the wall in her classroom as a reminder of the conditions required to “help to hold the larger ongoing conversation in the class,” (2.12.45-46). Paula also introduced norms within two or three days of meeting with a new cohort of teacher candidates and then posted the established norms on the wall for the duration of the course as a guidepost for engaging in critical dialogue:

> In our opening moves for every time we meet...we review the agenda, and the last thing is always to review our norms. I never start a class without making explicit reference to them, that we've agreed to do this with and for each other to stay engaged, to speak our truths, to experience discomfort, to expect and accept non-closure, to look for learning, and also to identify patterns in our own participation. (2.10.23-29)

Paula revealed that the practice of imposing the norms for critical dialogue in her class was new to her. For the bulk of her career, she believed that honoring the process of generating norms with her students addressed the unique needs of the individual learning community, and she grappled with the “tension between using agreements that other people have generated..."
versus” (2.12.45-47) using student generated norms. However, after years of working with teacher candidates to create norms and enact them, she came to believe that her undergraduate teacher candidates lacked the experience and language to develop norms that “hold us in critical reflective dialogue” (2.10.39). Still, it was important to Paula that her students understand the “essence of enacting” them (2.10.42). To compensate for this shift from student-driven norms to imposed norms, Paula assigned creative writing activities each day for two weeks at the beginning of her course to take her students on a deep, critical exploration of the norms and their meaning for teacher candidates’ engagement in CSJD-R:

The first two weeks every morning we did something very explicit with them. Like, [the first day they] go to the norm that [they’re] finding [they] have the most challenge [with] and then whoever is there with [them, they] write a haiku that [they] think would capture the essence of enacting that agreement. The next day, [they] create anti-skits [and answer the question], “What would it look like not to be holding ourselves to this agreement” and then fold into [their] skit how [they] would act as an ally and address it. On day three, [they] write a recipe. What are the ingredients [they] need in order to live this norm, and what do [they] do with them? It's then a much deeper dive into unpacking those agreements. (2.10.37-42)

Of the three participants, only Erin described creating norms with her students rather than providing them to “make meaning together” and “actively, proactively establish a sense of culture and trust in every room” (2.4.3-4). With new teacher residents in her program, Erin entered this process by devoting time to unpacking the definition of “norms” in a whole-class discussion about how they are used to create a shared understanding of their purpose in supporting critical dialogue. Since most of her students had never worked with norms before, this introductory activity invited her students to critically examine what it means to create a set of behavioral expectations for a group:

[With new teacher residents], instead of establishing norms and going into a norm construction exercise, we’ll first say, “What are norms? Do we have to have them? Have you ever set norms before in a class?” . . . bringing them along just
as younger people and checking in with them a little bit more often. So just a little... all the more nurturing and kind of caretaking role. (2.5.1-4).

Only after Erin believed the group had explored the term did she guide teacher candidates through the process of establishing the agreements they would draw upon to ground CSJD-R. She described the co-creation of norms as a way of insuring she doesn’t “lose anyone along the way or inadvertently turn anyone off” (2.4.44-45) so that every student’s voice could be included.

Regardless of whether these teacher educators provided prescribed norms or generated them with their students, they were unified in their purpose for establishing them. Amanda, Erin, and Paula anticipated the emotional challenges their teacher candidates would face during CSJD-R as they encountered new perspectives about race and unearthed implicit bias or previously unexamined racist beliefs. Additionally, they understood that “it is naïve to assume that the social justice classroom is an objective and safe space” (Breunig, 2016, p.5) for traditionally marginalized groups who were underrepresented in their classes as well as for White teacher candidates who had little experience examining issues of race. Therefore, these teacher educators established group norms to provide what Schein (1993) calls a “container” for dialogue that “permits people to handle ‘hot’ issues without getting burned” (p. 35).

Modeling Critical Social Justice Literacy

In operationalizing CSJD-R, these teacher educators described explicitly modeling the language and behaviors of critical social justice literacy to develop these skills and dispositions in teacher candidates. Described by Conklin (2008), modeling refers to “both having teacher educators practice the pedagogy they espouse and unpacking this pedagogy” to help teacher candidates understand the “thinking behind the practice” (p. 601). In the descriptions of their facilitation, Amanda, Erin, and Paula provided examples of doing the language and behaviors of
critical social justice literacy with teacher candidates, but they also made visible their thinking as they narrated the way they navigated emotions and decision-making during dialogue. Although all three teacher educators modeled components of critical social justice literacy during CSJD-R, this practice manifested in unique ways for each individual.

During CSJD-R, Amanda and Erin modeled language they hoped teacher candidates would use to engage in dialogue and bring into their future teaching and facilitation practice. For example, Amanda posed critical questions to model for teacher candidates the kinds of questions that push educators to examine their hidden assumptions about equity in schools and envision themselves as change agents. She probed students to think about questions like “What are other ways to consider secondary education?” (3.16.43) and “What is this, what does this mean to me, what does this mean to other people, and what am I gonna do about it?” (3.20.44-45). Through this practice, Amanda showed teacher candidates how they could use probing questions in their teaching role to place a critical social justice lens over the perspectives they brought into their work.

Erin also hoped to “provide language that could work for everybody in understanding what was going on” (2.19.30) with one another during critical dialogue as a way to model the language critical social justice teachers use to honor multiple perspectives. For Erin, it was through the collective effort to share and explore their individual stories that teacher candidates developed the dispositions of compassion and empathy necessary for critical social justice practice. “Compassion,” she said, “allows us to do the very important work that we’re doing in schools” (2.5.30-31). Teacher candidates’ stories often revealed racist ideas or microaggressions that evoked emotional reactions from the participants in the dialogue. At these times, Erin modeled the way she drew explicit connections between abstract concepts like compassion and
empathy to the language teacher candidates were using with one another in dialogue to help her students recognize the intersections between an individual’s lived-experiences, histories, and perspectives:

I think people tend to follow the guidance of the leader. There’s a modeling component. If the person who’s facilitating the conversation isn’t freaking out about that comment, [they] can set a tone that helps keep the group open to being okay with the fact that [someone] said these things. . . It’s modeling and gently pointing out connections between these practices to try to understand others’ perspectives [and] a situation in which we want to use those skills. (2.19.37-44)

These teacher educators believed that building teacher candidates’ capacity to understand how their perspectives were impacted by their positionality was a complex process that required modeling not only the language used in dialogue to, as Erin described, “talk about what they’re seeing [to] make meaning and figure out what to do” (2.2.15-17), but also demanded that Amanda, Erin, and Paula model the way they identify and understand their own identity. Therefore, Amanda and Erin intentionally named their identity as White, female teacher educators during dialogue. Amanda believed this practice was “particularly [important for] White students who are looking at me as a White teacher educator” (2.17.30-36) because, according to Amanda, White teacher candidates often feel they lack the multicultural knowledge to enter the dialogue. Similarly, in naming her identity, Erin provided an explicit example for her students of the connections she sees between her lived-experience and her identity. Therefore, Erin described herself as White teacher educator to model the language teacher candidates could use to discuss racial identity and to surface the stories of her students’ racialized experiences:

So I will very intentionally say, “As a 50 year old White woman, I blah blah blah.” Or “In the skin that I am in, my perspective is…” and we encourage others to do that as well so that people are invited in to address that and know that it’s ok to talk about race in class and where we were raised. Those factors are at play. We have to say it’s ok to acknowledge it all. (2.4.14-21)
Critical social justice practice calls for participants to recognize that their perspective is only one of many that may be engaged in the dialogue (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2015). In naming their identity, these teacher educators demonstrated another way that critical social justice teachers acknowledge their perspectives as they intersected with their positionality.

In addition to modeling the *doing* of critical social justice teaching for their teacher candidates, all three teacher educators intentionally made transparent the *thinking* behind their practice as they modeled in-the-moment decision making about their facilitation. For both Erin and Paula, transparency in naming their emotional reactions provided an opportunity for teacher candidates to hear the teacher educator track their internal responses and sense-making when confronting assumptions, language, and behaviors that reinforced racism and inequities. Erin recalled explicitly narrating the physical and emotional reactions she had during an interaction between participants in a small group dialogue when one teacher candidate inadvertently used racial microaggressions to describe the students at a local school. After realizing she felt angry and tense, Erin addressed her students:

I just said, “I’m feeling uncomfortable with what was just said, and I don’t know the right words for sharing why that makes me, but I’m going to try. …I am sweating and shaking so I don’t think there’s a lot of point in trying to hide it. I’m trying to learn to practice talking about these things so I am going to give it a shot. Is that all right?” (2.10.31-40)

Like Erin, Paula named the emotions she experienced in reaction to racist language or micro-aggressions uttered by teacher candidates during dialogue. However, because Paula believed in unpacking emotions as a way for teacher candidates to address issues of White fragility and understand the feelings that emerge in talk about the “injustices [people of color] experience” (2.8.28-24), she also modeled for her students the way she grappled with emotional challenges she faced during her own development of critical social justice literacy. For Paula, sharing her own stories of implicit or explicit bias or White fragility enabled her to illustrate her
“current challenges in understanding [her] own biases and also [her] facilitation” (2.7.13-14).

These reactions explored moments of shame, guilt, or embarrassment about a lack of knowledge or skills necessary to navigate anti-racist work:

   I try to use a lot of storytelling from my own lived experience. So you might hear me sharing stories that deliberately make myself vulnerable. I talk a lot about my past experience, but also about my current challenges in understanding my own biases and…my facilitations. (2.7.10-15)

Paula’s stories illustrated for teacher candidates an ongoing struggle to challenge her assumptions about the interplay between race, privilege, and equity in education. Paula perceived vulnerability and transparency in storytelling as a way to help teacher candidates who might become “mired [in resistance or White fragility]” (3.36.44-45) understand the thinking behind her practice.

   Paula also modeled the way she made sense of moments during CSJD-R when she discovered that her facilitation decisions reflected an oppressor perspective. Paula described one experience as painful to admit but fundamental to making thoughtful, critical decisions about her facilitation. For example, Paula said:

   We were in the middle of [discussing] some piece [we had read] and the students started talking about stereotypes. I thought it would be important for [my co-facilitator and I] to try to create a structure to surface our [students’] assumptions about different racial groups. And I said, “Let’s take a quick break. I’m gonna check in with [the co-facilitator] to see whether or not this hairbrained idea made sense.” (2.38.30-43)

During the exchange with her partner, Paula realized that she had omitted White from a list of racial groups to include in the dialogue:

   And I was like, “Holy shit. Yeah, of course to be White is to have a race!” We literally had just been reading about this. . . That stopped me in my tracks. So when we came back I made that explicit to the group. Something that just happened. I realized what I don’t know I don’t know. And here is how I figure it out. And I said, “It’s always humbling for me personally, but I also want to make that public. I really do stumble all the time.” (2.39.1-11)
Paula’s experience provides a rich example of the multiple ways these teacher educators modeled both the doing and the thinking of their practice. First, Paula modeled one way that critical social justice teachers honor multiple perspectives by pausing during the protocol to consult about adjusting activities in the dialogue with her Latina co-facilitator. In addition, Paula demonstrated for her students the way she processed her oversight and used that experience to expose the way her positionality impacted her pedagogical decisions. Finally, Paula’s vulnerability in sharing the omissions she made in her thinking about Whiteness as a race opened the door for students to witness the way Paula grappled with the recursive nature of her own identity development along a continuum of knowledge about race and identity, something teacher candidates, too, might have been struggling with in CSJD-R.

**Reading the Room**

Throughout CSJD-R with teacher candidates, Amanda, Erin, and Paula paid attention to, as Amanda said, “the social-emotional tenor of the room” (3.30.10-12), noticing shifting dynamics that they perceived might impact the effectiveness of the dialogue. Borrowing from their language, this section describes how all three teacher educators “read the room” to guide their facilitation decisions, which at times resulted in adapting, pausing, or abandoning the protocols they so carefully selected. Reading the room is defined as noticing “what’s going on as people communicate in small groups, including how the [facilitator] is participating, when the [dialogue] is moving forward, when it may be just about to leave the rails, and possibly even how to guide it back on course” (Kantor, 2012, p.1).

Both Amanda and Erin described reading the room as a fundamental part of their role in facilitation to help them process what they were observing in their students’ interactions and to think strategically about their next moves to navigate tensions or to push teacher candidates to dive more deeply into their emotions or the content of the dialogue. To Amanda, this meant
facilitating the experience of the dialogue rather than engaging directly as the Facilitator of the protocol. Stepping away from the facilitation role provided an opportunity for Amanda to shift her perspective on the interaction and consider the ways her students might be experiencing the dialogue:

My job... is to be reading the room and watching what’s going on, listening, trying to understand (3.9.26). [I’m] doing that at the same time that [I’m] facilitating. I don’t want people of color to have to stay at the table to make White people comfortable. And I also know that I don’t want White people to have to stay. Sometimes it’s about going to the balcony and taking a bird’s eye view on what’s happening in this situation. (3.10.3-5)

In response to their interpretations of what was happening in the room, both Amanda and Erin returned to the list of established norms as a reminder of the conditions required to, as Amanda described, “help to hold the larger ongoing conversation in the class” (2.12.45-46):

We have agreements or norms on the wall [and] practice those agreements in the context of the heated moment to unpack what’s happening for people. There is something about intellectual, emotional, and physical safety in [these agreements that help] you keep coming back to either the people, the idea, the concept. (2.12.44-47)

Amanda emphasized that, although norms were a tool for teacher candidates to turn to help manage tensions, they were not the magic bullet to resolve all “complex” and “messy” situations. She reiterated that “it’s not always going to work or be pretty” (3.9.19) when people become overwhelmed by their emotions. Amanda believed that reminding the group of their agreed upon norms shifted the focus from emotional reactions back to the important work of examining race.

For Erin, decisions to adapt the protocol in response to reading the room were also supported by group norms established in early meetings with her students, during which students agreed to flexible engagement in dialogue to support their work together:

Sometimes we just switch gears completely and don’t follow the plan or follow it and make adjustments (2.20.11-12). It's understanding that we shouldn’t force anything too hard. We have a norm to accept non-closure and hold true to that. So sometimes we open up topics and discussions and either time or conditions
don’t allow us to …tie it up with a neat little bow. [Maybe] we all need to step away for a little while and then come back together and try again. (2.21.22-27)

When Amanda, Erin, and Paula perceived tensions between students or within students that occurred as they wrestled with racial issues in critical dialogue, they also described pausing or abandoning a protocol and explicitly turning to a reflective activity as a tool to de-escalate tensions. Paula implemented this strategy in several ways. She explained that she invited participants to journal in response to a question or prompt, take a brief walk away from the context of the dialogue to “hear only one other voice” (2.33.39), or sit silently with their discomfort to consider how that silence impacted their ability to listen or re-engage as they returned to the group.

Erin also adapted facilitation as a result of her observations during dialogue by inserting additional reflective activities to create more intimate opportunities for students to make sense of what they were experiencing during small-group or whole class dialogue. These activities invited students to reflect with a partner to, as Erin described, give everyone a chance to “get some of it off your chest and [then] go back to what [we] were trying to do” (2.20.25-26). Engaging with a partner provided a medium through which teacher candidates could articulate their thinking and wrestle with complex or challenging ideas before sharing with a larger group.

Amanda, Erin, and Paula anticipated that CSJD-R would elicit emotional responses in their students, challenge students’ perceptions of power and positionality, and create opportunities to support students through a deep dive into issues of race and equity among other things. This required an acute awareness and sensitivity to often subtle physical and verbal cues from participants. For all three teacher educators, intentionally reading the room allowed them to identify teacher candidates’ reactions to the dialogue and guided their facilitation decisions in the moment.
Debriefing the Process and the Content

One final facilitation strategy that all three teacher educators used to engage students in critical dialogue was to debrief the process and the content. Debriefing was a culminating activity that took place after the conclusion of the critical dialogue. The predictability of this part of the critical dialogue to hold space for teacher candidates to engage in reflective processes and examine the patterns in the dialogue was perceived by Amanda, Erin, and Paula as fundamental to challenging students to think critically about their practice.

These three teacher educators described beginning the debrief by first asking students to speak to their impressions of the way the protocol itself or the interactions with one another impacted their experience in the dialogue. For Paula, debriefing the process included an opportunity to ask questions that guided teacher candidates to reflect on specific aspects of their participation such as, “What evidence do we have that we were living and embodying our agreements?” (2.35.44-45). This process revealed moments within the dialogue where teacher candidates embodied the norms for working and learning together and laid bare the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher educators’ facilitation of the protocol in moving the dialogue forward and including all voices.

Beyond asking teacher candidates to articulate their initial reflections on the process, Amanda and Paula shared that the debrief sometimes included independent extension activities to deepen teacher candidates’ knowledge development about the topic of the dialogue. For Amanda, the “reflection after the moment” was a way to capture teacher candidates’ insights after they had time to step away from the context because meaning “hits you at different times and in different ways and over the span of all of those conversations” (2.15.15-18). Therefore, for Amanda the debrief could extend beyond the classroom in the form of an assignment, a written reflection or exit ticket, or a blog post. Paula also included written reflections as an
extension of the whole-group debrief. She developed a reflective debrief activity that invited teacher candidates to write their reactions to four sentence stems: What I value, What I learned, What I need, and What I will do as a result of today. From this debrief activity, Paula gained “insights into how they were individually experiencing [their] work together” (2.35.32).

As described earlier, Amanda, Erin, and Paula believed that teacher candidates should be prepared to facilitate CSJD-R in their own practice, so they wove the gradual development of facilitation skills into the debrief. Practice in the facilitation of CSJD-R was an important component of the evolution of teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy because it “[helps them examine] how [they] explain this to [their future] students and what [they] would do as the teacher” (2.12.35). For Amanda, this process began in the whole group where she could provide explicit instruction about the form of discussion and her purpose in facilitation decisions:

[We prepare students] through some gradual debrief, through a lot of debriefing the facilitator models [and] talking about the dynamics, the flow, and the nature of the conversation as a process as much as the content. (2.12.38-41)

Through the debrief, these teacher educators made explicit the strategies they used for enacting the facilitation process and surfaced participants’ thoughts about the protocol, their facilitation, and the way they made sense of the interactions during the dialogue.

Across these three teacher educators, enacting CSJD-R was not an entirely predictable process. Although they had intentionally selected protocols and established norms to structure interactions and hold teacher candidates in the dialogue, Amanda, Erin, and Paula often found that they needed to be flexible in their facilitation to address shifting dynamics in the room. Attending to shifting dynamics often caused Amanda, Erin, and Paula to turn their gaze from their students’ needs to their own as they made sense of the experience of facilitation.
Reading the Self During Facilitation

The final component of a Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race, reading the self, is defined as the core practical and attitudinal techniques these teacher educators used to notice and mediate felt-tensions they experienced during facilitation as White teacher educators. Not unlike reading the room to take stock of the tone of the dialogue between participants to guide facilitation decisions in response to teacher candidates’ needs, all three teacher educators employed strategies to make sense of the intellectual (cognitive) and emotional (affective) tensions they experienced during facilitation to steer themselves back on course if they began to veer off track. These monitoring and self-care strategies were essential to holding them to the expectations they had of themselves as teacher educators with an equity stance and reconcile feelings of “unfinishedness” (Freire, 2000) as White critical social justice educators. The practices that fall into this component are Monitoring Thoughts and Tending to Feelings.

Monitoring Thoughts

For these White teacher educators, embodying critical social justice literacy was an ongoing effort to critically examine their practice. During facilitation, it was important to Amanda, Erin, and Paula that they monitor their thinking so that their own emotions and learning did not inadvertently influence the dialogue. For example, Amanda described monitoring her thoughts during dialogue by taking notes as a strategy to help her remain present but quiet during the dialogue, without teacher candidates turning to her for affirmation. She described entering the dialogue only to report back to the participants a synthesis of what she had heard them say and then asking them “what do we think about that?” (3.14.32):

[Taking notes] helps me in class dialogue. . . to stay in the moment,. . . stay analytical and quiet, and. . . keep reading the social-emotional tenor of the room as well (3.30.10-12). I’m a problem solver,. . . [but] that doesn’t help them to come up with a solution. I can let a lot of things continue on in the conversation
because I’m noting it and looking for the threads, and. . . it’s not ping-ponging back to me (3.29.44-47).

For Amanda, note-taking provided space for students to engage in dialogue without her direct influence. Note-taking captured and organized the meaning students were making of the topic so that Amanda could repeat back what she understood as the core of their interactions. After organizing her thoughts, Amanda could then intentionally move the dialogue in a particular direction:

I come in at a point to mirror back to them, “Here’s what I’ve heard so far, here is what I think the three big themes are, and what do we think about that?” They take their sense-making forward, and I don’t have to articulate my viewpoint at all. (3.30.2-6)

Erin described monitoring her thinking during facilitation by engaging in self-questioning. She understood this practice as critical to helping her maintain focus on the group’s momentum by keeping her “analytical and in a metacognitive state” (3.3.19-20). In this way, Erin was able to “evaluate what [she is] doing …from an objective perspective” (3.3.21-22). However, engaging in self-questioning during difficult moments in critical dialogue sometimes challenged her to separate emotion from objectivity. She worried that self-questioning could have a negative impact on equity work if educators lacked confidence or affirmation in their practice. Erin reflected that “[it requires] a great deal of humility and a willingness or ability to see sometimes things just don’t go your way even when you put everything in place that you can for success” (3.3.30-31).

Across the participants, monitoring their self-talk during facilitation helped them identify when they were experiencing judgmental reactions and purposefully re-frame their perception of White student resistance or anger as a product of “social and cultural reproduction” (3.16.21) that stems from students’ lived experience. For example, Paula believed that having a “stance of appreciation, not judgment” (3.35.35) was of primary importance in her work with teacher
candidates, but that this posed a significant challenge for her when teacher candidates demonstrated White fragility or outright resistance to examining racism or inequities. She described monitoring her self-talk as in response to these instances:

I used to just get mad when it got ugly, but now I [think], “Oh, how interesting you think that”. I might’ve thought that way myself in the past, and I can appreciate now. I appreciate people being willing to risk speaking their truth. The more I can keep myself from going to that place of, “Are you kidding me?”, the more I feel like I can work with that person to help them consider whether or not they want to keep thinking that way. I can remain fully present, evaluating and appreciating, and seeing how everything that gets uttered is a clue for what I can do over time to help them on their own journey. (3.36.1-10)

For Amanda, when White students made claims during critical dialogues such as they did not have a racial identity or that they believed racism ended with slavery, Amanda described being aware of her initial feelings of judgment and working to create a new internal dialogue to acknowledge the impact of her students’ histories and experiences on their perspectives.

In addition to monitoring her thinking during facilitation, Paula monitored physical signs to, as she described, “track” internal tensions and emotional discomfort during facilitation by paying “really close attention to my own physical sensations in my body” (2.7. 21-25). When she noticed physical responses that indicated she was experiencing anxiety or heightened emotions, Paula would briefly examine why she was having those responses. Awareness of her emotion and of events that triggered negative responses allowed Paula to manage her reactions and think critically about how emotions were impacting her practice in the moment.

Monitoring their thinking helped all three teacher educators notice and examine felt-tensions during facilitation that brought them to a better understanding of their students and themselves and helped them mediate their reactions to moments in the dialogue that might have otherwise elicited an ineffective or damaging response. However, the ongoing critical examination of their practice often left Amanda, Erin, and Paula feeling inadequate in their role
as teacher educator, therefore they needed to engage in strategies to build themselves back up and see themselves through the challenges of facilitating CSJD-R.

**Tending to Feelings**

These teacher educators sometimes found themselves struggling to reconcile their pedagogical beliefs as they became fragmented or were tested by the dynamics of CSJD-R. They grappled with tensions between their constructivist ideology and the compulsion to impose anti-racist ideals on their students; they struggled to choose between hiding emotional reactions or making them transparent, teachable moments; and they fought the humbling feeling that they had no business as unfinished individuals telling others how to think about race. To tend to these feelings, Amanda, Erin, and Paula described adopting strategies to care for themselves during facilitation.

One strategy they all used was to let go of feeling solely responsible for changing the beliefs of their teacher candidates. This is best illustrated by Amanda, who had experienced frustration early in her career when she faced resistance from White teacher candidates or failed to see immediate shifts in their beliefs and practices. When she first started engaging in CSJD-R with teacher candidates, Amanda was sometimes “overrun” by feelings of responsibility during facilitation and described a felt-tension between her own critical social justice literacy development and the expectation that she was the expert in the room. She shared:

> When we first started having conversations about race, it was tricky for me to be the facilitator, to be thinking -when my own development is right there with everybody else’s – “Who am I to tell somebody?” (3.9.32-36)

However, Amanda found that by seeing herself as “a learner in this situation” (3.9.31-32) and relinquishing traditional perceptions of power in her role as Professor, she was in a better position to learn with and from her students. Amanda illustrated this idea when she states:
It’s not about me, I am a learner in this situation. It doesn’t all depend on me. Maybe that’s one of the things [I have learned] over time. I used to think it all depended on me and it doesn’t. It depends on so many different features and factors and in the end, I’m constructing an experience but it’s gonna take root and hold on in so many different ways. (3.10.4-12)

This practice provided a sense of relief to Amanda. When she allowed herself to embrace a more vulnerable position as learner with and from her students in lieu of shouldering the responsibility of an expert, she saw an improvement in her ability to “moderate myself in the conversations much better than I could before” (3.9.41-43).

Like Amanda, Erin described positioning herself as a learner with her teacher candidates to protect the dynamic of shared knowledge construction. By assuming this stance, Erin discovered she was able to listen closely to her students to “to really think about their experience and struggle in this situation and think about the ways in which we are alike” (3.6.7-10). For Erin, the practice of intentionally thinking about herself as a part of the learning community rather than above or outside of it helped her believe in herself as “as the equity educator I like to think of myself [to be]” (3.2.33-34).

To tend to feelings of “shame” or of being “unworthy” to support teacher candidates in developing critical social justice literacy, Erin acknowledged that she practiced self-compassion when reflecting on her facilitation. Erin attributed her ability to “see [conflict] in context and not personalize it” (3.8.5-6) to a cognitively-based compassion training that she participated in with her facilitation team. She described appreciating herself for the work of engaging teacher candidates in critical dialogue around race regardless of student resistance, and acknowledged that no one person could be called upon to attest to the totality of human perspectives:

It’s messy. There are many situations in which it gets messy. You walk away thinking, “Did I do the right thing?” And [there are] many situations in which I don’t know in the end whether we did the best thing to do because we’re not experts in all of these realms. . . .We just try to get through it the best we can, knowing that it is better to be trying than to not try. (2.20.29-35)
Of the three participants, Paula experienced the deepest personal struggle with feelings of self-doubt and judgment. To “better equip [herself] to facilitate these kind of dialogues”, Paula found that adopting a practice of self-compassion was an opportunity to look for learning about herself as a fallible human:

[I am] learning how to be more cognizant of the mental tapes that go on, like “You suck at this” or “That was ridiculous. How could you have let that happen?”, and to turn that voice off then [replace it with] “You’re a learner, you’re a human, we all fall short. I’m sorry you have to take off your super human cape, but you haven’t reached super human status yet, [Paula]. (2.32.40-47)

In acknowledging herself as fallible, Paula worked to shift the focus from feelings of frustration or shame to feelings of empathy:

One [strategy is] to engage in more self-compassion because I know that I hold myself to really high standards, and I get irritated with myself when I fall short of what I’m hoping to do. And so I’ve really been trying to work on acknowledging that I’m human and, that in the same way that I expect my students to look for learning, that this is an opportunity for me to look for learning. Rather than to berate myself, [I need to] celebrate that this is the next step in where I need to better equip myself to facilitate these kinds of dialogues. (2.29.1-7)

Paula’s ongoing challenge to appreciate and value the evolution of her own critical social justice literacy illustrates why the facilitation of CSJD-R was a complex and emotionally daunting role for these White teacher educators. First, facilitation demanded Paula share publicly the peaks and pitfalls of her development of knowledge and identity about race in conjunction with working privately to understand what this meant for herself and supporting teacher candidates through this tumultuous process. To mediate this challenge, Paula relied on metacognitive strategies such as monitoring her negative self-talk and affective strategies like practicing self-compassion to manage feelings of frustration. Second, facilitation required her to take a deep, critical dive into cherished perceptions of herself as a teacher educator. This meant stripping away her identity as a “superhuman” and replacing that perception of herself with the more vulnerable identity of an
“an unfinished being in the world” (Freire, 2000, p. 51). In reading the self, all three teacher educators looked for ways to navigate the interplay between the public realm of facilitation and the private realm of their emotions.

Summary

In this chapter, I shared the detailed analysis of the transcripts across the three participants to capture the teacher educators’ experiences of facilitating critical dialogue to develop the critical social justice literacy of teacher candidates. Three distinct components of Amanda, Erin, and Paula’s CSJD-R practice were illustrated: preparing for facilitation, enacting and reacting during facilitation, and reading the self. In the next and final chapter of this dissertation, I summarize my study and discuss implications of Amanda, Erin, and Paula’s CSJD-R practice.
CHAPTER 6  
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS  

Summary of the Dissertation  

This purpose of this dissertation was to capture the ways three White teacher educators made sense of their experiences in facilitating critical dialogues about race designed to develop the critical social justice literacy of teacher candidates. To explore this phenomenon, this study asked the following research questions: (1) How do teacher educators plan for, facilitate, and reflect upon critical dialogue about race, racial equity, and social justice?; (2) How do they adjust their facilitation to support the development of teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?; and (3) What do they perceive as challenges both within and beyond their classrooms in facilitating these dialogues with their students? Chapter 1 introduced this study and situated it in the current landscape of teacher preparation that continues to grapple with how to “place diversity front and center” (Nieto, 2000, p. 180). To further contextualize this study, Chapter 2 presented a review of the current literature on a pedagogy of critical dialogue and teacher preparation focused on developing critical social justice literacy. A synthesis of the current literature on studies of teacher educators and the facilitation of critical social justice dialogues about race highlighted some of the intricacies in facilitating racial dialogue, specifically struggles with navigating the complexities of power in a non-neutral environment, managing teacher educator emotion, and structuring the dialogue to create inclusive spaces. This chapter illuminated the need to further examine White teacher educators’ perceptions of their facilitation practice. Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology, methods, and design employed for this study to examine how three teacher educators made sense of their facilitation experience. Chapters 4 and 5 presented the findings of the study in two parts. First, Chapter 4 included the narrative profiles of Amanda, Erin, and Paula as told in their own words. These narrative profiles
portrayed each participant’s individual perceptions of the racialized experiences of their youth and teacher preparation that contributed to the dispositions and strategies they brought to their work with teacher candidates and their facilitation practice. Chapter 5 surfaced dominant themes that occurred across participants that included the structural description of the experiences shared by all three teacher educators and named the essence of a Pedagogy of Critical Social Justice Dialogue about Race. In this chapter, I look across all that was presented in Chapters 1-5 to draw implications for teacher educators, future research, and my own practice as a White female teacher educator committed to creating more equitable schools through the facilitation of critical social justice dialogue about race.

**Implications**

I began this dissertation by claiming that, to make the invisible in teacher educator practice visible, there needed to be research that pulls back the curtain on the way White teacher educators conceptualize and enact critical dialogue about race. In this study, Amanda, Erin, and Paula welcomed us behind the scenes of their facilitation to explore and document how these three experienced, equity-oriented White teacher educators navigated the complex and emotional process of their work. While I was able to distill the individual stories and collective practices of these three teacher educators, the findings have revealed that there is more work to be done.

**Implications for Teacher Educators**

Within the narratives, Amanda, Erin, and Paula’s CSJD-R revealed concrete practices for facilitation that included Planning, Enacting & Reacting, and Reading the Self. The findings from this study have implications for teacher educators in each of these components. First, in relationship to planning, we learned from looking across their practice that it was important to seek collaborative partnerships with faculty of color. Planning with diverse faculty created the opportunity for these teacher educators to critically examine what was going to be taught as well
as how it was to be taught. As discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, it is important that the facilitator in critical social justice dialogues about race be sensitive to students’ emotional reactions (Cutri & Whiting, 2015), cultural communication styles (Gay, 2010), and racial identity development (DePalma, 2008). Although White teacher educators can be members of what Michael (2014) calls the “beloved community” - a term she adopted from bell hooks to describe the capacity for White individuals to be antiracist allies to people of color - the skin they are in will always be a representation of their racial privilege and Euro-American cultural heritage that can cloud their view. Internalized aspects of the learned ideologies of racism are likely to remain invisible to even the most experienced anti-racist teacher educators (Brookfield, 2014). Therefore, it is critical that teacher educators engage in talk about issues of race, white supremacy, and the hidden curriculum with each other to make visible the ways their assumptions could reinforce racist practices in their classrooms (Boyd & Glaizer, 2017; Quaye, 2012; Willey & Magee, 2016). This speaks to the importance of having a diverse facilitation team to “responsibly and collectively…mediate pervasive and potentially harmful viewpoints” (Willey & Magee, 2016, p.122).

However, Amanda and Paula often struggled to engage in authentic co-facilitation because racially diverse faculty were underrepresented at their institutions. This is not surprising as Black faculty remain underrepresented in colleges of education (Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups in 2018, 2019). Therefore, with the goal of developing critical social justice literacy in teacher candidates, teacher educators and programs of teacher education must consider advocating for and actively recruiting faculty of color. In a piece entitled “‘We Are All for Diversity, but . . .’: How Faculty Hiring Committees Reproduce Whiteness and Practical Suggestions for How They Can Change”, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017)
discuss the ways that this is easier said than done. Simply working to hire faculty of color is not enough however. Hiring committees run the risk of essentializing candidates of color if they make assumptions about an individual’s educational philosophies or identity development based on their race (Gorski, 2013). Just because a new hire is a faculty of color, does not necessarily mean that the faculty is committed to principles and practices of critical social justice and will make a good co-facilitator. In addition, it is important that faculty members of color are not burdened with the responsibility of co-facilitation. For this reason, it is imperative that teacher educators understand the complexity inherent in fulfilling their commitment to hiring faculty of color.

Furthermore, the findings on establishing an environment for CSJD-R suggested that all three teacher educators designed group structures with race in mind. However, when Amanda, Erin, and Paula determined whether to group students by racial affinity or across race, they spoke almost exclusively about creating safe spaces for White teacher candidates to begin to challenge their existing notions of race and racism. This meant inadvertently ignoring the ways this decision might impact the small, but not insignificant, number of non-white teacher candidates in their classes. Although affinity groups might support teacher candidates of color by providing space to examine shared experiences and perspectives (Quaye, 2012, 2014), the reality in most teacher preparation classrooms is that there is not a critical mass of non-white students to form an affinity group (Cho & de Castro-Ambrosetti, 2005). In addition, assigning groups by race can reinforce traditional un-democratic practices that force teacher candidates to conform to an imposed racial identity; for example, bi-racial students might have to publicly identify as either White or non-White (Gayles, Kelly, Grays, Zhang, & Porter, 2015). In cross-racial groups, confrontations can create pressure for participants of color to “teach” White people about their
experiences or can silence traditionally marginalized students and reinforce oppressive structures that further isolate them (Lambertz-Berndt, 2016; Tatum, 1997). Therefore, teacher educators should carefully consider how their own racialized assumptions inform their decisions when establishing groups based on race.

We learned in Chapter 5 that Amanda, Erin, and Paula selected protocols as a pedagogical strategy to give every participant, regardless of race, a voice in dialogue. While it shouldn’t come as a surprise that all three selected protocols given that my participants were purposefully selected through their participation in School Reform Initiative, an organization that champions the use of protocols, it is clear that the protocols had a significant impact on their practice. While protocols provided a structure for engaging in CSJD-R for these teacher educators, it is important to note that the purpose for the dialogue drove the selection of the protocol. For example, specific protocols were selected because they were designed to support dialogue about equity, multiple perspectives, problems of practice, or to analyze a text. In other words, they believed that the “[p]rotocols work for the [dialogue]. The [dialogue] doesn’t work for the protocol” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2015, p.7). For these dialogues to be meaningful, teacher educators must consider whose voices are included, be aware of the teacher candidates’ comfort and readiness to participate (Quaye, 2012; Sue, 2016), and be prepared to adjust their initial plans accordingly. Therefore, teacher educators who wish to facilitate CSJD-R, should plan for the flexible facilitation of protocols to support their students’ learning.

In addition, over-reliance on the rigid use of protocols might privilege one cultural voice over the other. For example, the structure of some protocols, including the adherence a prescribed set of group norms, can serve to silence cultural groups that favor passionate, emotional, and non-linear discussions or marginalize those whose cultural values indirectness or
subtly in communication. DuBois (1897) coined the term double-consciousness to describe a “two-ness… - two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…” with which Black Americans struggle to understand the self in relation to dominant ideologies and cultures. Because CSJD-R occurs within the broader context of societal race relations, teacher candidates of color who are participating in these dialogues are forced to navigate between their own world and the White world in conforming to dominant discourse patterns that can be imposed by uncritical or rigid facilitation of protocols. Feelings of discomfort, anger, or humiliation can create tension as teacher candidates of color struggle to reconcile the communication styles of the Western European framework with those of their own cultural and historical experiences (Sue, 2016). This contradiction “create[s] stressful confusions about how to resist oppressions versus when, where, and how to accommodate it” (Sue, 2016, p.277). However, though some research on communication styles highlights these differences to argue that the use of protocols can be marginalizing (Gay, 2010; Giri, 2006; Sue, 2016), teacher educators hazard essentializing teacher candidates of color if they cling to broad assumptions about the way individuals interact and reduce their perceptions of their students to racial or cultural binaries (Perea, 1998). To help elevate voices that are silenced in typical classroom interactions, teacher educators might provide alternative dialogic spaces such as Exit Tickets, online discussion platforms, or other forms of written communication as a means for students to engage in dialogue through varied cultural or personal discourse styles. Therefore, teacher educators who facilitate CSJD-R must remain vigilant to the critical examination of their assumptions about teacher candidates of color when selecting protocols to support dialogues about race.
In relationship to enacting and reacting, we learned that these teacher educators packed CSJD-R with concepts drawn from critical social justice literacy throughout their facilitation practice (such as power, positionality, knowledge, and agency) by introducing these terms and their meaning to the teacher candidates with whom they worked. While they packed these critical social justice concepts into dialogue, it is important to note that it is not just the packing in that stood out in Amanda, Erin and Paula’s facilitation, but the unpacking of these concepts as well. Through establishing norms, modeling critical social justice literacy, reading the room, or debriefing, these teacher educators intentionally unpacked complex ideas about power, positionality, knowledge, and/or agency with their students as they engaged in dialogue.

We learn in Chapter 5 that Amanda, Erin, and Paula helped teacher candidates unpack critical social justice literacy concepts by making explicit their own personal experiences related to race and facilitating dialogue about race as White women committed to preparing the next generation of classroom teachers to create more equitable schools. While the sharing of their experiences may be perceived as effective practice, bell hooks (2014) reminds us that the use of personal experience by teacher educators can encourage abuse of classroom freedoms. Therefore, although sharing personal narratives and drawing on personal experience can be an effective strategy to cultivate adult learning (Murray-Johnson, Ross-Gordon, 2018), when facilitating CSJD-R, teacher educators must remember that any personal experiences shared will always be shaped by their own racial experience and perspective and therefore, could reinforce oppressive practice. Hence, teacher educators who wish to facilitate CSJD-R must always strive to bring a critical lens to the experiences they share. We learn from Amanda, Erin and Paula that striving to bring a critical lens to experiences shared can be accomplished by reading the self.
Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study also have implications for future research. First, while this study focused on the “how” of the facilitation practices of these teacher educators, it did not illuminate the “what” of their practice as it is situated in the overall program or curriculum. Future studies are needed to explore the specific texts, including various forms of media, that teacher educators employ to introduce topics, provide narratives and counternarratives, or support reflection on critical social justice dialogues. These studies might also include the analysis of course syllabi, program descriptions including field experiences, and more detailed descriptions of the connections between texts, field experiences, and critical social justice dialogues about race.

Details about the way Amanda, Erin, and Paula mediated their emotions during dialogue revealed the importance awareness of one’s own racial identity had in helping these teacher educators make sense of their thoughts and feelings during facilitation. While this study did not seek to understand the impact of teacher educators’ own racial identity development on the facilitation of critical social justice dialogue about race, the varied racial experiences during the youth and teacher preparation of these White teacher educators, presented in each narrative profile, left me wondering about the impact that early racial experiences had on their practice. Currently, the majority of literature on teacher educators who facilitate critical social justice dialogues about race focuses on teacher educators’ practical or pedagogical knowledge and practices or on dispositions for facilitating racial dialogues (Cutri & Whiting, 2015; DePalma, 2007; Laman et al., 2012). Future research might focus on drawing specific connections between teacher educator racial identity development and the teacher educators’ praxis.

While the research in this study provided a detailed look at facilitation from the teacher educators’ position, it only provided a glimpse into the institutional challenges and barriers to
facilitation. Therefore, there needs to be research that focuses on the relation to organizational factors such as faculty and student diversity, race talk among faculty and the preparation for teacher educators to enact CSJD-R, and the incorporation of CSJD-R across programs. A final concern that is left unanswered by this study is the effectiveness of these teacher educators in developing critical social justice literacy in their students. Although Amanda, Erin, and Paula all indicated that they did not expect to see an immediate shift in teacher candidates’ beliefs or practices, they shared that this was a change they hoped would be revealed in time. Further research is needed to explore the alignment between teacher educators’ perceptions of their facilitation and teacher candidates’ perception of their participation in CSJD-R designed to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy.

Finally, future research is needed to examine the beliefs and practices of White teacher educators through the lens of Critical Whiteness. Critical Whiteness Studies emphasizes that “[w]hiteness, acknowledged or not, has been a norm against which other races are judged” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, p. 1). Research employing this theoretical framework could be used to deepen the structural understanding of Whiteness in the facilitation practices of White teacher educators and to examine the “communicative illusion” (Allen, 2004) that can mask oppressive dynamics in dialogues about race between teachers and students.

Implications for My Practice

As a White teacher educator who also facilitates CSJD-R with teacher candidates, engaging in this study has forced me to take critical look into my own cherished perceptions of classroom dialogue as a pedagogical tool for developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of critical social justice teachers. Because the majority of teachers continue to be White and because my experience in becoming a teacher educator has been dominated by Whiteness, I have been blinded by a position of privilege that has allowed my conceptions of the rules for
engagement in dialogue to go unexamined. The stories of these teacher educators have ignited in me a need to examine much more critically my assumptions about the dynamics of power in critical dialogue to re-frame the lens I have used to view democratic education – including dynamics of power between the teacher educator and institutional structures and norms, between teacher and student, and between students. In addition, I have adjusted the way I approach modeling -a perspective I probably developed as a classroom teacher - that valued modeling as the *doing* but rarely the *thinking* of a behavior I wanted my students to adopt. Finally, I see the humility and vulnerability of Amanda, Erin, and Paula’s facilitation practice as an example of how I, too, can embrace the humanness of fallibility, not as an excuse to step away from the responsibility of examining my own thoughts, feelings, and actions, but as a source of self-compassion and purpose to forge ahead with the work of critical social justice education.

**Conclusion**

*All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions-and society-so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom.*

– bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

The challenges and best-practices of teacher educators to prepare teacher candidates to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population is well documented in the current literature, and my study has presented a glimpse into the ways three White teacher educators grapple with engaging in one practice, critical social justice dialogues about race. This research shows the complexities teacher educators navigate as they plan for, enact, and mediate dialogues that push teacher candidates to critically examine the entirety of how they see race in the world. These dialogues call on participants to peel back layers of their identity and positionality in a public space, some for the first time.
When beginning this research, I anticipated that the answers from these teacher educators would be based on an equity view of education that was prevalent in the SRI community. Having spent time myself facilitating at a number of SRI meetings and retreats, I thought these teacher educators would conceive of critical dialogue as bound to the protocol they so carefully selected, since the protocol was designed to ensure equitable participation. I was therefore surprised to find that, while these teacher educators spoke of the protocols as a tool that helped them frame the dialogue, they had no qualms abandoning or adjusting the protocol in response to their perceptions of dynamics in the room. For these teacher educators, equity did not mean equitable time. Rather, they sought to provide equity of participation. Equitable participation was the product of the keen awareness of Amanda, Erin, and Paula as they read the room and made in-the-moment decisions to guide the dialogue to be as inclusive as they could, given their own limitations.

Completing this study also illuminated the many internal tensions which impact facilitation and provided the beginning of a continuing conversation about the preparation of teacher educators to facilitate CSJD-R. First, we must continue to acknowledge the very humanness of teacher educators – their bodies, their histories, their identities. Teacher educators are not superhuman, but rather in their “unfinishedness” (Freire, 2000) hold the potential for ethical growth and change. Second, if the goal of CSJD-R is to develop teacher candidates’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support a racially diverse student population, should not that goal expand to include the teacher educators whose responsibility it is to prepare them? As hooks (2014) so aptly said, “All of us in the academy…are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions” (p.34). The need for teacher educators to engage in the critical self-examination of their practice cannot go overlooked.
Finally, it should be acknowledged that these three teacher educators, Amanda, Erin, and Paula – in all their strengths and imperfections – openly shared some of the most emotionally challenging experiences of their teaching career. Without their willingness to lay bare their most intimate thoughts and to reveal even recent manifestations of racism and bigotry in their practice, this work would not be possible. I have the greatest respect and gratitude for these teacher educators for sharing their stories with us. It is my hope that their collective experiences will inspire further examination into the facilitation of critical racial dialogues.
APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear ______________________

My name is Natalie Hagler and I am a doctoral student in the School of Teaching and Learning at the University of Florida. I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation study exploring the ways teacher educators experience the phenomena of facilitating critical dialogue around issues of race and equity with teacher candidates.

I am seeking to recruit three to five participants currently serving in faculty positions as teacher educators and that have a reputation for employing a pedagogy of dialogue in their practice with teacher candidates. In addition, the hope is to gain participants who have an equity-stance, a history of membership and affiliation with the School Reform Initiative (SRI), and are amenable to engaging in three Zoom interviews lasting approximately 60 - 90 minutes each. Interviews will take place beginning early in July according to participant availability and concluded prior to the start of the Fall semester.

The first interview will ask for a focused history of your experience in relationship to the study. The second will explore your current experiences as a teacher educator specifically related to the facilitation of critical dialogue focused on diversity, equity, and social justice in order to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy or critical consciousness. The third interview will ask you to reflect on and make meaning of the previously shared experiences. I believe my dissertation study will expand the professional discussion of the facilitation of critical dialogue to include the meaning teacher educators make of their practice and shed light on the operationalization of a pedagogy of dialogue by making the approaches to discussion facilitation visible. In addition, I hope that this dissertation study might unearth the ways teacher educators experience and manage tensions around facilitation as they grapple with their own emotions, teacher candidates’ resistance, or institutional influences. As such, the results of my study may be of interest to those who work in teacher education programs across the nation.

If you would like to participate in this study, nominate one or more participants, or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at nreeves@ufl.edu or 803-554-1881, or my advisor, Dr. Nancy Dana at 352-359-2140. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Natalie Hagler
APPENDIX B
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview One: Focused Life History

This first interview will focus on the participant’s life history related to the phenomenon of facilitating critical dialogue focused on race, culture, and ethnicity up to the current experience as a teacher educator. The objective of this interview is to develop rich descriptions that capture the participant’s lived experience as related to their present position as a teacher educator with a self-described equity-stance.

Prior to beginning the interview, I will share the following with each participant:
As a reminder, I am using the term equity-stance to describe teacher educators who claim to foreground diversity and social justice issues in their research and practice.

**Overarching Idea**: How did you come to be a teacher educator with an equity-stance?

- Tell me about a time that was significant for you in forming your understanding of your racial or cultural identity?

- Share a story with me about a time that was significant to you in understanding the impact of race or cultural issues on your family or a close member in your community.

- As a student, what kinds of experiences did you have with diverse populations in educational settings? (or) Tell me about your experiences with diverse populations as a student.

- Tell me about the home and community you grew up in.
  - Where did you spend your childhood?
  - What was your family’s socioeconomic status?
  - What were your parents’ occupations?
  - Did you go to public or private school?
  - Who most influenced your ideas about cultural diversity growing up?
  - What opportunities did you have to travel within the US or internationally?

- What experiences led you to become a teacher?
  - What grades and subjects did you teach?

- What experiences led you to make a shift from K-12 teaching to a career in teacher education?

- Prior to becoming a teacher educator, how did you understand the concept of equity as part of your work as an educator?

- Tell me about an experience from your preparation to work as a teacher educator that was significant in shaping your professional identity.
Interview Two: Participant’s Reconstruction of the Experience

The second interview concentrates on the participant’s reconstruction of the experience within the area of the study. During this interview, the participant is asked to describe the ‘how’ but not the ‘why’ of the experience in the study. Though this process, the researcher and participant co-construct meaning that reveals new questions to guide the next interview.

**Overarching Idea:** What is it like for you to be a teacher educator with an equity stance? How do you facilitate discussions with teacher candidates around issues of diversity and social justice? What are the details of your practice?

- In order to establish a common language, I’d like to begin our interview by asking you some questions about would define to a few terms.
  - In your practice, what does diversity mean to you?
  - What do you mean when you talk about social justice with your students?
  - How would you define cultural competence?
  - What is your definition of critical consciousness?
- If I were to observe your class during a time that you were facilitating a critical dialogue, what would I see?
- Tell me about the role you play in facilitating critical dialogue in your classes.
- Tell me about the way you plan for critical dialogue in your current course.
  - What processes do you consider in planning for your role as a facilitator?
  - What educational theories frame your planning and preparation for facilitation and organization of the critical dialogue?
  - What do you consider to be the goal of a critical dialogue within your course?
  - How does the facilitation of critical dialogue within your class fit within the culture of your current institution? If I were to observe a faculty meeting about including diversity and social justice in the teacher education program, what would that look like?
- How do you know when a student is demonstrating cultural competence during a critical dialogue? What does it look like to you?
- How do you know when a student is demonstrating critical consciousness during a critical dialogue? What does it look like to you?
- Share a story about a critical dialogue which was conducive to developing critical social justice literacy in teaching candidates?
- During the process of facilitation, how do you mediate moments of tension when you perceive a student as struggling to confront the content or process of the critical dialogue? Share a story with me about a critical dialogue in your class that escalated, left you feeling unsettled, or that didn’t go as you had hoped. How would you describe your role in mediating these tensions with students?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced student resistance to engage in critical dialogue. How do you mediate your responses to student resistance to engage in critical dialogue?
- Tell me about a time when you were surprised by your emotional responses to student comments about diversity or social justice during a critical dialogue in your class. How
do you mediate your emotional responses to interactions that conflict with your beliefs about diversity or social justice?

- How would you describe your awareness of your own race during a critical dialogue with your students? Can you describe a time when you became acutely aware of your Whiteness during a critical dialogue?

- How do you reflect on the quality (effectiveness?) of a critical dialogue in your classes? What questions do you ask yourself about the process, your students’, your facilitation, or the context?

- In what ways have you adjusted your strategies or processes for facilitation after reflecting on critical dialogue incidents in your classes? Tell me about a time when you made an adjustment in your planning as a result of reflection on practice.
Interview Three: Reflecting on Meaning

The third interview asks the participant to reflect on the meaning of their experience by connecting the intellectual and emotional aspects of their personal and professional lives. This final interview explicitly focuses on how the participant makes sense of the experience of facilitating critical dialogue.

Prior to beginning the interview, I will share the following with each participant: As a reminder, I am using the term equity-stance to describe teacher educators who claim to foreground diversity and social justice issues in their research and practice.

How do you understand your role as a teacher educator in facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates? How do you navigate the tensions between theory and practice in developing teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?

- Please briefly describe what it means for you to be described as a teacher educator with an equity-stance.
- Can you describe a time recently when you had a clear understanding of yourself as a teacher educator with an equity-stance?
- How does a focus on diversity and social justice shape your work as a teacher educator? In what ways does it help your work? In what ways does it hinder your work? How might this focus set you apart from other educators in your institution?
- How does the use of critical dialogue shape your work as a teacher educator? In what ways does it help your work? In what ways does it hinder your work? How might this focus set you apart from other educators in your institution?
- Please share your understanding of dialogue strategies in preparing teacher candidates to meet the needs of diverse students.
- What would you describe as the most important elements of a classroom conversation designed to develop teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?
- Given the stories and details that you have shared about your life as a teacher educator, how do you understand your role as a teacher educator in facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates?
- How would you describe the intersection of your race and your role as a teacher educator? What, if any, impact does your Whiteness have on your understanding of the facilitation of critical dialogue with your students? In what ways does it help your work? In what ways does it hinder your work?
- How do you navigate the tensions between theory and practice in developing teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?
- How do you navigate the tensions between theory and practice in developing teacher candidates’ critical social justice literacy?
- If you were talking to faculty colleagues about your work facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates, what would you stress as important?
- If you were talking to the administration at your institution about your work facilitating critical dialogue with teacher candidates, what would you stress as important?
- How does your institution support your practice as a teacher educator with an equity-stance?
- How does your institution hinder your practice?
- Is there anything further you would like to share?
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Natalie Hagler is a teacher educator whose current work focuses on practitioner-driven reform efforts to enact critical social justice practices in K-12 classrooms and teacher preparation programs. She completed her master’s degree at the University of Florida in 1996 where she studied Secondary English Curriculum and Instruction. Natalie has worked in public and private education for nearly two decades as a secondary classroom teacher, instructional supervisor and reading coach, and teaching and learning specialist.