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The Voice of Scholarship in Education

"Becoming" a Teacher

by Mary Louise Gomez , Anna-Ruth Allen & Rebecca W. Black – 2007

Background/Context: *In this article, we trace the development of a prospective secondary science teacher as she begins to examine her identity as a White person. We explore how the social languages of her teacher education program challenge, intermingle, and blend with ones she brought to the program from her midwestern small-town childhood and a professional life in science.*

Research Design: *In this case study, we deploy Russian philosopher M. M. Bakhtin's notion of ideological becoming to trace her development from program entry through four semesters of program participation. We show how various fieldwork, course, and volunteer experiences challenge the ways she talks and thinks about herself, her students, teaching, and the roles that race/ethnicity and culture play in these relationships.*

Research Questions: *We ask: How does this prospective teacher understand her identity as a White person? What relationship does she understand that this identity has to teaching students who are from many different cultural backgrounds? What kinds of dilemmas arise for a prospective teacher when she begins to understand who she is as a White person? How does she negotiate them? And what role does her teacher education program play in encouraging and supporting her negotiations?*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *The article concludes by considering what practicing teachers and university teacher educators might do to support new teachers who have begun to question their identities and those of their students, and to craft pedagogy to meet students' needs. Included in the recommendations are considerations for the location of classroom placements for prospective teachers; the nurturing of collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and university teachers; teacher education program pedagogy that promotes critical inquiry into issues of race; and the development of communities of prospective teachers who can struggle with such issues as their identities as racialized beings.*

With regard to many of her personal characteristics—race/ethnicity, social class membership, language background, sexual orientation, and ability—Alison Smith[1] is a member of the homogenous United States teacher corps (Swartz, 2003). Like many U.S. teachers, she is White, middle class, English speaking, heterosexual, able bodied, and attends a university 40 miles or less from the small town in which she grew up (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1999; Howey & Zimpher, 1989; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). In future decades, prospective teachers with such characteristics will continue to be those who enter the teaching force in the United States (Gay & Howard, 2000). Conversely, demographic projections foretell an increasingly diverse student population in terms of linguistic and cultural affiliations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In this article, we explore how Alison, a prospective secondary science teacher who is a member of that homogeneous teacher corps, begins to understand who she is, who her students are, and how best to teach them. We ask: (1) How does Alison understand her identity as a White person? What relationship does she understand this identity has to teaching students who are from many different cultural backgrounds? and (2) What kinds of dilemmas arise for a prospective teacher when she begins to understand who she is as a White person? How does she negotiate them? And what role does her teacher education program play in encouraging and supporting her negotiations?

In the following pages, we offer a theorized case study of one prospective secondary science teacher's development as she struggles to consider what it means to be a White teacher who will teach students who are culturally different from her. We show how Alison is someone who, in Bakhtin's (1981) words, is engaged in a process of "becoming" a teacher—one who is a person in process of "gradual formation" as she discovers and generates meaning from the experiences in which she participates (p. 392). "Ideological becoming" is a gradual process and will not necessarily satisfy those who dismiss young White teachers as teacher candidates because they see them as ill prepared in their prior personal experiences, work histories, age, or language and ethnic backgrounds for the culturally diverse classrooms of the 21st-century United States. We argue that teacher educators must find ways to (1) educate members of the current and likely future homogeneous U.S. teacher corps in programs of teacher education for their diversely populated classrooms, and (2) imagine mentoring and support programs that continue their knowledge and understandings following initial certification so that all children and youth are taught well. We offer narratives of one prospective teacher's development as an opportunity to think through what we might do to prepare teachers for the diversity of their future classrooms.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) conjectured that individuals are "ideological selves," socially determined persons who view the world in which we live through a system of ideas mediated via language and experiences. Bakhtin saw people always as "ideologically becoming"—through conflicts and struggles with various viewpoints, agendas, values, and voices. This process is never finalized and undergoes continual revision. Bakhtin saw one's development as occurring not slowly, continually, and linearly, but as especially impacted by "critical moments," ones filled with tension and conflict that alter one's consciousness. These constitute a "punctuated equilibrium" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 386), causing individuals to reorganize, strengthen, or alter their system of thinking. Or, as Bakhtin (1981) put it, "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's consciousness, is enormous" (p. 348) and consequently can have great impact.

Bakhtin (1981) saw this reorganization of thought occurring as people are influenced by and distinguish between different social languages. Social languages may be distinguished by professional group membership (e.g., firefighters, attorneys, or orchestra members), context of employment (e.g., government workers), age, social class, interests, and geographic location (e.g., upper-class teenage girls from the northeastern United States), or by many other various associations. He saw that individuals choose to speak from one of many different social languages depending on the context of one's speech—and the audience to whom one is speaking. Social languages do not wholly determine, but rather *shape*, a speaker's voice; the speaker gains ownership over the word when he "populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (pp. 293-294). Bakhtin believed that an integral part of being recognized as a legitimate member of a particular social or professional group is being able to take up and align oneself with the social language and probable responses of other members of that group. However, not all social languages have equal power; they differ in influence and may compete with one another for authority. There always are groups that speak in oppositional voices to a particular social language, making language contested, dynamic, and transformative.

We came to see Bakhtin's notion of punctuated equilibrium as especially helpful in characterizing the discord—and later, reorganization and alteration—of Alison's belief system as she intermingled the social languages of her teacher education program with those with which she entered it. Bakhtin (1981) saw such potential discord in one's thoughts and talk as occurring in "zones of contact" in which individuals choose to struggle against different kinds of authority, such as a student resisting a teacher's authority. According to Bakhtin, the tensions inherent in such struggles are essential because the process of ideological becoming involves social interaction by which individuals come into contact with "the surrounding ideological world" and with social languages that may conflict with those with which they already are conversant. In the following pages, we explore how, in the zones of contact created by her teacher education program, Alison began to do just this: appropriate and negotiate the social languages of the program, and integrate them with the social languages that she brought to it and in which she already thought and spoke.

As we show in subsequent pages, one of the social languages that Alison was asked to integrate into those she spoke and thought about was that of being a White person rather than an un-raced person, as so many Whites consider themselves to be (McIntosh, 1997). She was asked to consider the question, What does it mean to be White and to be conscious of that standpoint and those privileges (Frankenberg, 1993) and pleasures (Roediger, 1991) that accrue because of the social invention of one's color (Allen, 1994)? And what does it mean to teach youth of color who see, feel, and understand how race operates inside and outside school?

As we write about what ideas punctuated Alison's standpoint and practices in the years she was a prospective teacher at State University, one of the most powerful was the notion that she is White and of what King (1991) called a dysconscious habit of mind, or an "uncritical and limited way of thinking" (p. 146) about how race works. As we show, Alison was confronted with how she and others in her school, the university, and myriad institutions of U.S. life had "invested" in Whiteness and a school curriculum built around it; these institutions had brought them "resources, power, and opportunity" that she unknowingly was enjoying and exploiting (Lipsitz, 1998, p. vii). Exploration of how such social languages of race intermingle with those Alison brought to teacher education is an idea that we trace as we follow Alison through four semesters of preservice teacher education.

METHODOLOGY

Alison is one of 6 participants in a large longitudinal study of preservice secondary teachers' development. We followed these prospective teachers through the 2 years of coursework and field experiences that constitute their teacher education program. We choose here to discuss Alison's development because, in many ways, she is emblematic of preservice teachers at State University who are White, bright, articulate, well prepared in their content area specialty, and invested in students' subject matter understanding, achievement, and personal growth and pride. The data we draw on for this article include interviews with Alison Smith in the four semesters of her teacher education program, and interviews with program faculty and staff who were Alison's teachers. In the first interview, we asked Alison to talk about what led her to decide to become a teacher, key beliefs about herself and others, and her goals for those whom she taught. As the semesters passed, we continued to ask Alison about her beliefs about herself and others, her goals for her students, and how and if these were changing. We also asked her to give specific instances from her coursework and field experiences that she saw as influencing her ideas and her practices. Likewise, we asked her teachers to reflect on how the program provided opportunities for students to alter their perspectives.

The case we present is what Stake (2000) referred to as an instrumental case study, because it aims to illuminate how issues of race, class, and gender get taken up in prospective teachers' talk. The case is both about Alison's development as a teacher and about a teacher education program that encourages prospective teachers to be critically reflective about why they do what they do—particularly as it relates to cultural diversity. We have tried to explore how the ideas that Alison brought to teacher education were challenged in an environment designed to promote a particular discourse concerning self-reflection, and social justice and equity for all people.

Data analyses were conducted via a process that was both inductive and deductive. First, we engaged in an inductive process in which we read the interview transcripts for the recurring themes in Alison's ways of talking about herself and her students in multiple contexts: in the university classroom, in a volunteer site, and in a school classroom where multiple and sometimes conflicting social languages met. We also noted how Alison's ways of talking changed over time and how particular incidents, or "critical moments," in zones of contact created opportunities for Alison's equilibrium to be punctuated and for her to consider new or different ways of thinking. We also conducted deductive analyses in which we examined Alison's talk for the cultural assumptions and orientations implicit in her ideas about "good teaching," using it as evidence of Allison's appropriations, over time, of elements of the social languages of her teacher education program.

CONTEXT

The secondary teacher education program is located at State University, a large research-oriented university in which 89% of the undergraduate students are White. State University is located in a midsized midwestern city, Lakeville, whose population is 89.5% White. The city schools, however, have a 40% student population of color, primarily from African American, Hmong, and Latino families, and a total student population of 25,000. State University's undergraduate program enrolls approximately 75 students in each cohort, with students majoring in every major content area: English, mathematics, social studies, foreign language, and science education. About 15 study science teacher education in each cohort group.

The School of Education at State University has been certifying teachers since 1879. The most recent redevelopment of secondary education took place over a multiyear period in the 1990s and is characterized by a four-semester sequence of course work and practica. A shared social language—best characterized as one oriented to critical self-reflection, interwoven with close attention to issues of social justice and equity—grew over this period as faculty and staff argued out their ideals and how to operationalize them. Although faculty within the program use different vocabulary to signify these commitments, they have in common a set of shared principles. For example, reflecting on what was important for prospective teachers to know and be able to do, Kurt Davidson, a science teacher educator, expressed his belief that it was crucial for prospective teachers to develop relationships and engage with the perspectives and social languages of their students.

> The really important thing about teaching, more than anything else, more than the content knowledge, starts with the relationship with the students, you need to know the students; that makes all the difference in the world, building a relationship and rapport with them, and participating in the community of their school.

Deirdre Calloway, a social studies teacher educator, articulated similar goals for preservice teachers.

> I want them [prospective teachers] to focus more on what is happening with their students than on what they're doing. What I find is the earlier I can shift them to evaluating the success of what students are learning, the more successful they will be. I want them to believe in and know how to teach all youth. . . . I want them to believe all kids are intrinsically equal and require our respect.

The program offers a four-semester sequence of courses accompanied by field experiences designed to build knowledge about students, families, and their communities; knowledge about self as a teacher; knowledge about curriculum and its development; and pedagogical knowledge. According to the program's Web site, the faculty are committed to assisting prospective teachers in “exploring teaching and learning issues related to ethnic, cultural, and language diversity, social class, and students’ special needs and abilities” and to furthering a self-reflective and continual process of ideological becoming. This approach to providing many different points of contact for preservice teachers to explore what diversity and self-reflection are about is highlighted in the following excerpt from an interview with one of Alison’s university teachers, Clarise Dobbs, who teaches a course in the first semester of the program.

> I think that there is much more coordination [in the program’s courses reorganized since 1996] in what instructors are doing and perhaps the kinds of experiences that we’re designing. So that people have multiple places where they are working with families and students and teachers that I think is more coordinated than has been in the past. So that they’re hearing similar messages, whether or not we’re talking about a student who’s homeless or a student with severe cognitive disabilities. So that there is a strong second [a similar voice] across courses and across experiences that I don’t think was there in the past.

As this instructor noted, the program promotes a common social language across its courses, one that is committed to social justice and equity. The program also strives to design experiences for prospective teachers across multiple, varied sites. As we will show, these different contexts and experiences provide prospective teachers many points of contact with parents, students, and faculty members, enabling their interactions with social languages that may conflict with their own.

ALISON’S STORIES ABOUT TEACHING

In this section, we narrate how Alison’s participation in multiple course and fieldwork sites catalyzed her thinking about what it means to be a White teacher. We tell four stories, each of which demonstrates aspects of Alison’s “ideological becoming” focusing on herself, her students, cultural diversity, and pedagogy. Each narrative shows how Alison’s ideas about these dimensions of teaching were interrupted and how she continually was called on to reintegrate the knowledge she held with that to which she was introduced. In the first story, we see Alison begin to think about what it means to have so many students from different cultural groups learning together in one high school. This diversity is new to Alison because she grew up in a small town where people differed in social class, but most were of a northern European background. The discourses she had learned from her family as a child and teenager were that people who are culturally different from one another often are in conflict with one another. These notions are disrupted as she begins her teacher education program.

STORY 1: “IT’S [NORTH HIGH SCHOOL] NOTHING LIKE MY HIGH SCHOOL: I MEAN MY HIGH SCHOOL WAS LIKE ALL WHITE KIDS”

In the first semester of her teacher education program, Alison enrolled in three courses, School & Society, Adolescent Psychology, and Strategies for Inclusive Schooling. The courses were taught by faculty from three different departments in the School of Education and were coordinated by one faculty member. Instructors asked students to consider the aims of education in a liberal, democratic society, particularly what the relationships between schools and society are and should to be; how and why adolescents behave as they do and how and why schools conceive of them and organize particular experiences for them; and how students who are labeled as requiring special education services experience schooling.

One example of how the three instructors coalesce around ideas prominent in the social language of the program, and present in all three courses, is the way they talk about the role of self-reflection and how it can further prospective teachers’ attention to who their particular students are and how teachers are responsible to them. For example, educational policy studies faculty member Norman Avery said of the School & Society course,

> I buy into the rhetoric in the School of Education around this term the reflective practitioner. I want them [prospective teachers] to be very thoughtful about what it is they are after and what it is they are trying to achieve when they teach—to have a clearly conceived rationale about what they are trying to accomplish, and to have an approach to their students, be it in the selection of curriculum or in the selection of pedagogy that seems tailored to achieve those purposes with the particular population of kids they are working with. One of the assumptions is that they become very familiar with who these people are and how they think and what makes them tick, and what they bring with them in the way of strengths, concerns, challenges, and so forth. . . . One must take one’s responsibility to one’s students seriously—be respectful of them, listen to them.

Educational psychology faculty member Ted Tollefsen, instructor for Adolescent Development, echoed Avery’s concern that prospective teachers think a great deal about who they are in relation to their students. He stated that a key goal for the semester is to develop students' self-reflection and to understand how, as having been White middle-class English-speaking and able students, they should not generalize about all students' secondary school experiences. He said he hopes that the course would "make students aware that the experiences that they had as teenagers or as adolescents were not typical, and are not the benchmark by which they should measure the experiences that they see in students in the classroom." Clarise Dobbs, who taught Strategies for Inclusive Schooling, said,

> The focus of the course is to provide background for preparing teachers as to what inclusive education is, and their role in that process . . . to see that families and students are the center of everything you do. . . . I'd like them to be self-reflecting people who are respectful of the people they work with and the students they teach.

In addition to enrolling in the courses taught by Avery, Tollefson, and Dobbs, each prospective teacher also enrolls in a 12-week (8 hours per week) practicum requiring participation in a secondary school classroom in which his or her content area is taught. The site chosen for Alison's practicum was North High School, a large comprehensive high school and one of the most culturally, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse schools in the city. Twenty-six years old at the time of our data collection, Alison reported having had very few experiences with people of color as a child. She remembered the way that her family and other community members talked negatively about the Southeast Asian immigrants who already lived in her town and were arriving there in larger numbers. As an adult with several years of work experience in a science laboratory located in the same city as State University, Alison distanced herself from what she now perceives as her family's racism. Yet, she also acknowledged that her experiences and knowledge of people of color remain limited. In our first interview with Alison, she talked about the tensions between what she had come to know of people of color as a resident of Lakeville, and the social language around diversity in which her family had spoken. She expressed hopefulness that her teacher education program could help her grow in this area. She said,

> At the beginning of the semester when I was kind of feeling nervous about the program and nervous about being in schools and everything, and my parents said, "Oh don't worry about it, you can teach at a small private school where there are only White kids" and I was just thinking, that's not what I want to accomplish. If that's where I am when I'm done with this program, then I definitely missed something.

Alison expressed that what her family imagined as the comfort of teaching only White youth was limiting, and she looked to her teacher education program to provide her with the experiences and information she needed to teach a broader range of youth.

Alison's practicum assignment at North High School was her first experience in a school with such a diverse student population, and she expressed both surprise and excitement about it. In describing her impressions of the school, she said, "At first when I got to North I was very shocked . . . I was very shocked because it's so racially diverse there. It's nothing like my high school, I mean my high school was like all White kids." Alison overcame her initial surprise and expressed enthusiasm for the potential that this practicum experience provided for her to work with a diverse student population, stating, "The longer I've been there, the more rich the environment has seemed to me, and the more I'd like to work in an environment like that [in the future]."

Although Alison embraced the new "variety" she found at North, she seemed to view racial difference in terms of what Grant and Sleeter (2003) called a "food, fun, and festivals" model of diversity. Such a position permits adherents to see diversity as something that is best met by celebrations of various people's food, dances, art, and other expressions of their cultures, but not necessarily by making curriculum and instruction more intrinsically interesting or relevant to their lives. For example, in talking about what was exciting to her about North, Alison remarked, "Just all the stuff that I never—you know, like that we never had at our school. Like all these different clubs for the different minorities. The different—North does this fine arts week the week before spring break where all the kids are performing."

Initially, Alison spoke from a position in which "difference" primarily is identified with students who are not White, and "diversity" is defined in terms of explicit displays of cultural membership and identity, such as clubs or public performances based on cultural affiliation. She also speculated that harmony among groups at North could be attributable to the length of time that the teens there had gone to school together.

> It's a great atmosphere, like the kids get along with each other. I don't feel that . . .there's not a lot of racial problems. These kids are really comfortable with each other; they've been going to school with each other for the longest time. I mean, I'm sure there's some isolation that goes on, or some racial stuff that I just don't see because I'm not wandering the halls during passing time or something.

In this interview excerpt, the meaning of "racial stuff" is associated with acts that are obvious and visible—perhaps name-calling in the hallways. Race also is presented as a "nonissue" because she doesn't see any explicit racially motivated conflict. At the close of the semester, Alison no longer saw differences among people as something to flee from or as something that foretells conflict between groups, but her vision of diversity still seemed narrow and focused on surface features of people's cultural differences: the ethnic foods they eat, the holiday celebrations in which they participate. We see Alison as struggling to understand, What *do* differences signify? She was uncertain.

The context of Alison's placement was important; it allowed her a complex point of contact in which to struggle with ideas about differences and their meanings. It allowed her a place in which to experiment with what she thought, to take up and try on various social languages—the ones she brought from home, those of her teacher education program, those of her friends and colleagues from the science labs she had worked in, and so on. Sometimes these embodied competing notions about who diverse youth were and what school should offer them. Her teacher education program was telling her to think about who people are, what they think, and what makes them "tick," and not to consider her own growing up as representative of the students in her school. Alison knew that her growing up experiences likely were not aligned with those of her students because she had grown up in a small town, but it was not clear to her exactly how such differences manifested themselves, nor was she at all certain that she was able to tell who people were on the "inside" or what they thought or why. Despite her teacher education program's goals, such knowledge as to what individual students from various groups thought about and what mattered to them remained hazy for Alison.

STORY 2: SCIENCE: "IT'S NOT A BLACK AND WHITE THING, YOU KNOW."

During the second semester of her program—in the program's first of two student teaching semesters—Alison enrolled in a Science Methods class and was responsible for observing and supporting a teacher's practice throughout the week. She also was responsible for teaching one period a day on her own as the semester progressed. She again was placed at North High and worked with a freshman biology teacher, David Smith, who was middle-aged, White, and a veteran of the North High staff. Students of varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds populated the class. As the semester began, Alison began to try out perspectives offered in the previous semester's coursework to reflect on and question some of the curricular and pedagogical decisions made by Mr. Smith. Her statements indicated an emergent awareness of the need for curriculum and instruction that are relevant to all students. She pointed out that in his biology class, Mr. Smith showed many films that feature White males as protagonists. She said,

> He shows Hollywood movies in his earth science class, like *Twister*, and *Apollo 13*. And during last semester our focus [in the first semester university coursework] was on inclusion, so I was like, "What does *Apollo 13* have to do with the Black female students you have in your class?"

In this conversation, Alison explicitly referenced how the perspectives offered in her Inclusive Schooling course influenced her thinking about Mr. Smith's pedagogy. Alison could see how the films Mr. Smith showed did not feature heroes with whom a broad audience of students could identify, nor was she certain about exactly why he showed these movies in biology class—other than that he often relied on worksheets for teaching and the films provided students some relief from those. She also talked about what she was learning from her current science methods class at the university and acknowledged the importance of making science classes ones in which all students can be engaged.

> [Students think] science is a bunch of facts to memorize. My own classes were like that in school. I was like, the more facts I could know about, the better it was. But, for most kids, that is inadequate. . . . That's another thing I've been struggling with. . . . We've been talking a lot in our methods class at the university about making science applicable to the majority of students, making it applicable to their lives so they remember it and use it when they leave school.

Mr. Smith was willing to have Alison experiment to see if she could make the content of Biology I "more interesting" to students, so she organized the students into collaborative groups and asked that they make models of cells. Although few groups were able to carry out the project to her exact specifications, she did not blame the students. Instead, she argued that they had had few experiences like this at North—taking theoretical ideas and attempting real-world models of them—and that when such projects were new, they were challenging to complete. She also recognized her own novice status at carrying out such lessons; she asked, "How can my students know what to do when I am uncertain about it myself?"

Further, Alison chose lessons that reflected a viewpoint that basic science content is neutral and unrelated to the topics of identity or race/ethnicity. Based on her prior professional experiences in a science lab, she operated from a social language that positions science as a neutral discipline based on objective "laws" of science, such as gravity. Such a perspective ignores that science also is a discipline that upholds various "theories" of science that often are developed and promoted by those in positions of power.

> The nice thing about science is that you don't necessarily have to be so politically correct, because talking about cells—it's not a Black and White thing, you know. It's not based on race, everybody has cells, they all pretty much look the same, they do the same things, so that's one nice thing about it—it's that maybe those issues don't come up as often. But then when they do come up, you need to think about those hard, you need to really think about them hard.

Alison found comfort in this aspect of teaching biology; she did not have to worry about the content of the biology information she presented. She also spoke of not having to worry about being "politically correct" when teaching the functions of cells, and said that studying these is not a "Black and White thing"— that cell appearance and functions are not based on race. She said that "these issues"—presumably ones that involve dimensions of race—are not as central to her field as they perhaps are in other academic content. Further, she asserted that when issues that involve race do arise, one must "think about them hard" and carefully consider what to do. She seemed unsure about what generally to do when such situations arose but knew that she must make careful decisions when faced with challenges that involve race/ethnicity and curriculum. Thus, she tries to hold these ideas simultaneously—that science content is neutral but also that one's pedagogy must cast a broader net as a means of engaging diverse student populations and address issues of race "when they come up."

Alison asked important questions about the engagement of all her students in her content area specialty, and she drew on course work from her prior and current semesters to do so. She said that she had challenged Mr. Smith, asking him about the films he shows in class and their relation to students' racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. She also tried to make biology a class that interests all her students and that is salient to their lives. Alison is imagining how to accomplish these goals and is making small steps to bring her heartfelt notions about the importance of making science meaningful to all youth. However, she remains uncritical of the role that race plays in the development of theories of science and the ratification of what is valued as science school curricula.

STORY 3: "EVERYTHING IS ABOUT WHITE PEOPLE, FOR WHITE PEOPLE, IN THIS CULTURE"

In the third semester of her teacher education program, Alison again participated in a school-based field experience, this time in a middle school located in a suburban community near Lakeville. She also was required to volunteer for 3 hours per week and enrolled in three required courses: Adolescent Learning, Teaching Diverse Learners, and Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum. The latter two were taught by the same instructor, were interwoven in content, and fulfilled the university's requirement for a course intensive in writing in one's major. Two teachers stood out for Alison in this semester. When interviewed, she repeatedly referenced the interplay between what she was learning from both Rachel Baker (teacher of an acting class in which she volunteered) and Pamela Samuels (instructor for her two courses focused on diversity, and language and literacy) and what she brought as understandings about herself and students to these experiences and her own ideological positioning.

As part of her Teaching Diverse Learners course, Alison was required to conduct volunteer work, for 3 hours per week for 12 weeks, in another zone of contact with youth who were different than she on several dimensions, including race/ethnicity, social class, ability, and language background, and to participate in discussions about these experiences. Alison chose to volunteer in an acting class at the university that was designed as part of a comprehensive program (including tutoring and courses in academic subjects) to enhance the college preparedness of middle school students of color. The teacher of the acting class was Rachel Baker, a White doctoral student in her 30s. Rachel had been a middle school teacher in both a large city and in suburban settings earlier in her career, and more recently, she had worked for the local Urban League supporting teens of color who faced challenges of poverty and school failure. Alison saw Rachel as being like she—White and midwestern—but as having knowledge and skills that she did not. Rachel not only was comfortable working with female African American adolescents but also was able to specifically tailor her instruction and activities to engage with and build on students' strengths and interests.

> I can tell that the kids have a good time in the class. Because Rachel Baker, who is the teacher for our class, she lets them be who they are. . . . And she really tries to pick topics, if they're going to do some kind of on-the-spot acting; she picks situations for them that they can relate to as well. . . . I mean, she picks ones that are kid-oriented and that are interesting to [them as] people of color. So that's something that is good. I don't think that teachers always realize that the examples they make in class are totally based on their experience in life, and not based on the kids' experience, but I think Rachel does a good job of basing things on the kids' experience. So that's one thing that I should strive to do.

Alison now can see that she must not only engage students in the material she is teaching, but also that she must build bridges from their interests and experiences to the subject matter that she teaches. She also sees how too often, teachers fail to do this; instead, they ground their pedagogy in their own experiences and interests, as Mr. Smith had done when he showed the movies *Twister* and *Apollo 13*. This was revelatory; she not only needed to craft intrinsically interesting pedagogy, as she had tried to do when she had asked students to make cell models, but she also needed to ground those projects in students' lives and concerns. Observing and supporting Rachel's teaching provided her with a social context in which to understand this important part of teaching. Alison saw her prior understandings (about what it meant to provide projects that would make school more engaging) ruptured. The equilibrium she temporarily had established was unbalanced. She now could see that making biology more "fun" or "interesting" was inadequate to help all students learn.

Alison also recognized how race/ethnicity provides people with a sense of community that can include or exclude members of different groups. She often came early to acting class and experienced being a "minority" for the first time.

> It's strange being the minority. It's a very unique experience. And I don't know exactly what to do. When I'm sitting there, and I'm the only White person there [slight laugh], and the kids are of African American descent, and they're are having a good time with each other, and they're all talking to each other, I feel very intimidated. Like I don't know what is acceptable in terms of my behavior and what is not acceptable. So I kind of hang back. . . . The thing that I'm learning the littlest bit is what it's like to be a minority. I mean they would be just fine without me there. And you don't get that impression growing up White. Because everything is about White people, for White people in this culture. And there is a whole—and they [African Americans] have a whole community and a whole culture and a whole, you know, family system that has nothing to do with me, that I have no idea about, that I can only . . . somewhat understand by watching them interact and, I mean they have a whole language that has nothing to do with me.

Unlike the "foods, fun, and festivals" view of cultural diversity that Alison expressed earlier in her program, she began to see difference in new ways. She now sees "culture" more as an inherent part of people's lives, as opposed to being about performances and clubs as she had thought in the past. She also came to see Whiteness differently, as permeating every aspect of people's lives and as something that students of color were required to negotiate. These ideas were made visible to her as she reflected on her "minority" status in the acting class and also as she came into contact with and reflected on the social languages of students in the class. At its close, perhaps most important, Alison recognized what she did not know. She realized that this was not only book knowledge, but also experiences in the world with people who were different from her and who had much to teach her.

Another voice that Alison was able to draw on during this semester was that of her course instructor Pam Samuels, who modeled the sort of critical, self-reflective pedagogy that she hoped prospective teachers would take into the field. Pam, who taught the courses Teaching Diverse Learners and Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum, claimed that one of her key goals is to have students recognize "that you should look at yourself before you start looking out at your students, as far as your own preconceptions and assumptions and ideas." A former Las Vegas, Nevada, middle school teacher, she had taught many Latino and African American youth. In her university classes, she offered numerous examples to prospective teachers of when her own curriculum and pedagogy had been inadequate for students' learning. She also asked prospective teachers to read such books as *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, Your Blues Ain't Like Mine, The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven,* and *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Reading these texts was meant to punctuate students' equilibrium about race relations in the United States and to provoke conversation among students and to help them probe their own biases. The course also required students to read and discuss thought-provoking articles by Beverly Tatum, Carl Grant, Peggy McIntosh, Lisa Delpit, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Christine Sleeter, and James Banks. A primary focus in several of these texts is the importance of recognizing and interrogating one's own position or place in the world. Alison said of this experience,

> We read lots of articles about different ways to deal with biases we have in the classroom, and how to recognize them, and the importance of knowing that we have biases, regardless of what we're doing about them. There's something important about recognizing you have biases. . . . I discovered in reading and talking about these books what a terrible bias I have towards people who are from a lower [socioeconomic] status than me. Wow!

Alison went on to discuss the importance of such awareness and critical self-reflection and expressed how Pam's pedagogy enabled her to articulate, rearticulate, and reformulate her ideas; Alison's initial ideological positioning and conceptions about race and teaching came into contact with and often collided with opposing ideologies and voices—coming in the form of course texts and open discussions with her peers. Alison spoke enthusiastically about the courses and emphasized the extent to which Pam Samuels pushed her cohort of prospective teachers to consider ideas that were challenging but created a safe space in which to do so.

> That semester—third semester—changed everything for me. Like if I hadn't had third semester I'd be a different person and a different teacher. I really feel like it was the turning point in the program. . . . It

> just opened my eyes in ways that I wasn't aware that I was close-minded, I guess. So when you have ideas, and you've always had those ideas, and you've never challenged your own ideas, if nobody ever gives you the opportunity to do that, you live your life thinking that everybody's thinking what you're thinking.

Alison's words indicate that she is increasingly aware that her ideological position is situated within a specific cultural context that she draws on in her everyday interactions, and that others who do not share her background also may not share that world view or those beliefs, or understand her actions. What Alison found in the course, through interacting with Pam and her classmates and the texts that they read, gave rise to what Bakhtin (1981) referred to as the "primordial dialogism of discourse" (p. 275). According to Wertsch (1991), this primordial dialogism "is to be found in the ways in which one speaker's concrete utterances come into contact with, or 'interanimate,' the utterances of another" (p. 54). In this instance, we see Alison recognizing the ideology manifested in her own voice and becoming aware that there are biases in her ways of using language and viewing the world. This is underscored as the ideas she expressed in class came into contact or collided with those of her classmates, her instructor, and the voices of authors of course texts.

These twin experiences—being a student of Pam's and Rachel's and observing them question past teaching and model inclusive practices—provided Alison with important scaffolds for her thinking. She recognized, at the close of the semester as she began her final student teaching, how the social languages with which she had been imbued and the ideological position from which she operated were inadequate for the career she had chosen if she wanted to meet the needs of her students. She felt both excited and humbled by the experiences that the program had provided her and sought more guidance for her pedagogy.

STORY 4: "RACE IS A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED IDEA"

In the fourth semester of her program, Alison conducted her second and final student teaching, a 20-week experience, 5 days per week. She was placed, as she had been in the third semester of her program, at Windy Shores Middle School in a suburban school district near Lakeville. Contrastive with North High, Windy Shores had a majority population of White middle-class students. The largest population of students of color at the school was Asian, many of whose parents were professionals. Early in the semester, Alison reflected that many of the Asian students at Windy Shores, although more affluent than teens of color at North High, also were similar to them; she believed that many Asian middle schoolers did not like or trust her because she was White. She claimed, "It is very clear that some kids do not feel good about me because I am White."

We see this as a "critical moment" in Alison's teaching because her earlier belief that race is not implicated in teaching science is "punctured." Alison viewed this dilemma as something that might be allayed through altering her teaching practices—by developing a dialogic space for instruction in which both she and the students would become actively involved. She said,

> I want to change this, and earn their trust and respect—but it will be hard. At North, I had to really take notes myself and lecture in my first student teaching, and I don't want to do that any more. What does that have to do with anyone? Now, I struggle to come up with lesson plans that really get them involved in a way that is real and meaningful, and is related to them as kids. It is tough . . . tough [to do].

Alison was reorganizing her ways of thinking about her responsibilities and the practices allied with this thinking. Working on a team at the middle school, with teachers representing varied subject matter specialties, she felt more optimistic about doing so. Her cooperating teacher was Lawrence Farmer, a White middle-aged man whom Alison described as being very attentive to students and also willing to collaborate with her in critically reflecting on classroom practices and students' achievement. She also spoke of how hard Mr. Farmer works at centering his practices on students' interests and needs. She said that Mr. Farmer admitted that he simultaneously is energized and exhausted by teaching in this way "because he is working so hard to make everything as good as it can be, he sometimes loses sight of himself enjoying himself." Alison saw how challenging teaching in ways that decentered the teacher could be.

Alison' s experiences at Windy Shores provided more zones of contact for reflection on the many challenges of adhering to a student-centered curriculum. Although she was teaching a majority of White youth, numerous students with diagnosed disabilities attended the school. Alison was able to think about and put into practice many of the ideas she had learned over the semesters, including developing differentiated curriculum, grouping students of a wide range of abilities for learning, and finding ways to assess all students in a fair and equitable way. What the placement did not afford her was understanding how to accomplish inclusive, student-centered practices in a racially and ethically diverse setting.

Alison felt that at the middle school, she had a better role model for what she wanted to be as a teacher than she had had at North. She also was able to practice some of what she was learning at the university in her science methods classes. The instructor for the course, Kurt Davidson, spoke about an approach he called "teaching for understanding," in which teachers design classroom experiences in which "students can construct relationships among concepts, extend and apply their scientific knowledge to new areas, reflect about their experiences, articulate what they know, and make knowledge their own." He went on to explain how he introduces this approach in the course.

> I try hard to move [university] students away from the idea that learning consists either in the ability to solve problems (algorithmically) or to recall factual information. The key is to help youth develop a rich conceptual view of the big ideas (theories/models) in science that they can reason with and apply these to existing and especially new situations. The ability to articulate this kind of understanding to others is heavily emphasized throughout.

These ideas about teaching made an impact on Alison, and in the following passage, she begins to question her previous ideological position—one in which science was a neutral discipline, one made up of solely objective laws. She began, instead, to think about the constructed nature of many scientific theories. She explained,

> Because we have been learning about "teaching for understanding" so much and we have been discussing the differences between different ways of thinking about and teaching science, I began to think about how so much of what I was taught relied on memorization; it was focused on rote learning which had nothing to do with who I was or what I was interested in. . . . I have been thinking about theories and *how they are made*. It took me a long time to figure out . . . I never realized that theories were *not* the truth, that they were ideas people made and that they are changeable. Because I was taught by rote, I was memorizing *the truth*. They [theories] did not need change or modification. Now I see that *we* can change them [italics indicate her emphasis].

Alison also incorporated this notion of "teaching for understanding," and how theories are constructed by people and therefore changeable, into her ideological position and ways of thinking about race. She said that in her course, Teaching Diverse Learners, Pamela Samuels had talked about race as a socially constructed idea, and Alison made a connection between race as constructed and theories in science as also created by people.

> Race is a socially constructed idea. I never understood this before! When I first encountered this last semester, I felt, you can't take race away, we need race to know who everyone is—that's another way we are trained as a cultural member to see, that person is Black, so that is the way they behave, or that person is White, so this is what you can expect from them. It's wrong and very hard to unlearn.
>
> I now realize that society is something we created and if we had created it differently, it *would* be different. I think many Americans think you can't change society or do anything about it. For example, it is *natural* that you separate all the kids in wheelchairs—*we need to take care of them*. But, it is *our choice* to do this. This doesn't happen naturally. Clarise Dobbs made us think about this idea [in the Strategies for Inclusive Schooling course]. I am taught to fear Black men on television, in movies, in books . . . *People* taught me this, not by what they said, but by the ideas *in* the movies and books and TV shows, by how Black men are *shown* to us [italics indicate her emphasis].

In the above instance, Alison articulated how the social languages of her teacher education program collided with and provided her with new ways to think about the social languages and ideology that she brought to teaching from her childhood, from the books she read and movies she watched, and from her general socialization as a White U.S. resident. She began to see how ideas present in courses with, for example, Clarise Dobbs about strategies for inclusive schooling, Kurt Davidson regarding science teaching, and Pamela Samuels about teaching diverse learners, although voiced in different ways, fit together and provided her with rich and complementary theories and ideological positions with which to ground her practices and correspond with her evolving vision of the world and how it works.

The opportunity to talk through these ideas on a continuing basis was provided by our research project and not by the program per se. Our hunch is that our continual questioning of Alison provided her with some scaffolds for thinking about notions such as the social construction of ideas, which may or may not have occurred explicitly for all students in the program itself. To be agents of change, ideas need to be percolated, circulated, and examined for their merit. When teacher educators provide the opportunity for these processes to occur over time and across occasions, prospective teachers *can* imagine new ways to behave that lie outside personal experiences and the hegemony of Whiteness.

Prospective teachers also require role models who can understand, articulate, and extend ideas about race, culture, students, teaching, and learning. Although North High School provided a rich context for learning to teach, Mr. Smith, the Biology I cooperating teacher, did not practice in ways that were aligned with the program; in fact, his teacher-centered practices conflicted with much of what Alison was reading and reflecting about. And, although Alison's program required her to experience two semesters at a middle school to facilitate her Grade 6-12 certification, moving to a suburban and mostly White site did not allow her the location in which to hone the knowledge and skills she had begun to acquire about racially and ethnically diverse people at North High School. This placement did, however, provide Alison with a very thoughtful, energetic, and caring teacher who reflected many of the values of the program and spoke in a complementary social language to that of many university faculty and staff members. Further, Mr. Farmer was supportive of Alison's experimentation with student-centered practices and freely gave of his time when she needed to talk through dilemmas of practice and theory.

DISCUSSION

We return to our opening questions: What did Alison learn about her identity as a White person during her teacher education program, and what relationship does she understand her identity has for teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds? And what dilemmas did she face in her teaching as she began to understand who she was and who her students were? As Alison entered her teacher education program, she was inexperienced in thinking in a complex way about the roles that race, ethnicity, and culture play in people's lives. She had grown up in a community where racial tensions existed between Whites and people who were different from them, and she had been taught that these conflicts were natural between people from different groups. However, she acknowledged her ignorance about race, ethnicity, and culture, and she sought more information and experiences; she eschewed hiding and teaching only Whites.

In her early experiences teaching a diverse population of youth, Alison focused not on herself and her role as a teacher, but on who her students were and their relationships with one another. She saw that indeed, youth of varied backgrounds could and did maintain peaceful relations, but she was unsure what to attribute that to—longevity of friendships, familiarity with one another's cultural celebrations? She explored the explicit dimensions of students' cultural affiliations and sought classroom remedies to their exclusion in instructional representations (e.g., *Apollo 13*); she saw how students required curriculum that included members of their group. However, in the first months of her program, she did not see beneath the dances, holidays, or food to deeper meanings of what it means to be Latino, African American, or Hmong. She also took a bit of comfort in the idea that science might be more neutral in content than other academic fields—after all, cells were not Black or White. She acknowledged that teaching materials and practices needed to be intrinsically interesting and motivating to all students but was uncertain beyond this maxim how these might be crafted.

In the second year of her program, Alison experienced many ruptures in her thinking. Especially powerful were two teachers, Pam Samuels and Rachel Baker, whose discourses and practices offered her both an ideological base and a practice base from which to explore difference and its meanings. As she observed Rachel use students' culture and interests to create curriculum for a homogeneous group (African American young women), Alison began to understand what it meant to make students central to one's teaching. It was not enough to have their images represented in a text or for the activity to be motivating or fun for teenagers; the curriculum must begin with who they are, what they are interested in, and what they require to achieve. Simultaneously, Alison was reading, thinking about, and discussing varying ideas about what multiculturalism and culturally relevant pedagogy were in her course work. Further, she witnessed how demanding crafting such pedagogy could be—even when there were only a few groups represented (i.e., Windy Shores Middle School).

Specifically with regard for science teaching, we saw Alison change her understandings about what science is and how to craft her teaching of it. She moved from a position that what science teachers must do is alter students' engagement in learning the "neutral" content of the "laws" of science to one in which a teacher engages students with the constructed nature of knowledge. In turn, she saw how she must help develop all students' understandings of how power and race relations are implicated in the construction of knowledge such as scientific theories. She also saw that it was not adequate to create an appealing activity about the parts of cells and their interactions. Rather, Alison began to understand that she must start with students' interests in and concerns about their bodies and how they operate, for example, and link these to lessons about what cells are and how they work.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of Alison's understanding in the third semester of her program concerned U.S. culture—that it was "all about White people, for White people." We believe that it was not a single voice or experience that led to this change in her thinking, but the result of the intermingling of many voices, those of teachers at the university and in the public schools, of students she taught and observed, and in the texts that she read and discussed. From the standpoint of understanding the hegemony of Whiteness, Alison could see how theories about the way the world worked were constructed by certain individuals to serve certain individuals and that if these had been made by people and were not immutable truths, they could be changed.

Finally, she saw her role as a White teacher as central to her students' achievement. She understood, without rancor, that it was important to recognize her own Whiteness and to recognize how the ideological privilege it afforded her in relation to students of color might affect how such students responded to her and her practices. Essentially, they might resist learning from her if she taught from a position that privileged an uncritical habit of mind about race. In her processes of ideological becoming, Alison began to recognize how her Whiteness would be implicated in her students' successes and their failures.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this article, we have drawn on varied and complex examples of one prospective teacher's talk about teaching and an attempt to illuminate her struggles of ideological becoming. These examples are not intended to show some sort of linear progression through the stages of the program, nor are they intended to demonstrate some sort of epiphany in Alison's viewpoints on the relationships among race, ethnicity, culture, science, and teaching. Rather, we chose these examples to illustrate specific elements of her journey through the semesters of the program, elements that we see as having particular implications for teacher education. As teacher educators ourselves, we firmly believe that there is no "bag of tricks" that can be introduced in methods courses, nor are we suggesting that there is any fixed set of practicum and student teaching experiences that, when combined, can bring about some immediate understanding of the multicultural and pedagogical theory presented in coursework.

What we are trying to illustrate through these examples of the program's ideals, instructors' intentions, and Alison's interview responses is that many prospective teachers, like Alison, are ready to learn about issues of equity and social justice, how these come into play in their teaching, and what they need to push them toward an articulated vision of what their teaching might look like and how it will benefit students. Alison's journey of "ideologically becoming" a science teacher was laden with tension and conflicts, and often she lacked surety at what, exactly, was the "right" thing to do. It is our hope that her professional development continues to be characterized in this way—that her practices do not "become" finalized or fixed, that her understandings of herself and her students remain critically reflexive and fluid, and that collisions with ideas she has not before considered continue to disrupt and unsettle her thinking and practices. We hope that she continues to attend to and negotiate the various social languages that permeate the contexts in which she lives.

What implications does Alison's becoming a teacher have for teacher educators? First, the location of a prospective teacher's placements and the classroom teachers with whom she works is critically important. We believe that North High School was an ideal setting for Alison's development but that her teacher mentor at North did not provide her with the kinds of support or questioning that she needed. Later, in her move to a more suburban setting, Alison lost the diverse racial and ethnic context in which to negotiate her practices. She was, however, able to connect with an excellent mentor who shared many of the ideals articulated by program teachers. That mentor, combined with her teaching and learning experiences with Rachel Baker and Pamela Samuels, may account in part for why, when she was placed at Windy Shores Middle School, she was able to make so many gains in understandings about herself and her students, and about the ways in which race, ethnicity, and culture affect teaching and learning.

Recently, the teacher education program at State University has begun to develop professional development school relationships with two Lakeville-area high schools. With these, cooperating teachers are participating in seminars with prospective teachers and a university teacher educator who will have a long-term relationship with the school. We see these as benefiting all participants. Opportunities to refine one's understandings of theory and practice potentially enhance all group members, especially prospective teachers if their school district-based and university-based teachers are working and thinking together.

Consonant with this notion is that more opportunities need to be made available to think through ideas that prospective teachers meet in school classrooms or university course work. Preservice teachers require many, many occasions to interrogate their practices and to understand how these are meeting or failing students' needs. And, importantly, they need safe spaces with thoughtful and listening group leaders who can help them consider how their racial and cultural identities are implicated in curriculum planning and instruction.

In such communities of prospective teachers, group leaders can create zones of contact in which the ideological positions that preservice teachers bring to teacher education are made visible and prominent. Discussion of these must be tempered. Mentors must find a way to challenge preservice teachers' existing ideological positions and yet maintain the civility of the group so that different persons can wrestle with and understand one another's ideas. Moreover, such discussions must be presented in a manner that does not cause individuals to shut down, but enables them to see conflicting ideological positions and take them into account in their own processes of ideological becoming.

Mentors must present the sorts of problems that disrupt prospective teachers' notions about themselves as racialized beings, about their construction of who "others" are, and about what constitutes appropriate curriculum for all students to learn. Such questions as the following might be taken up in efforts to explicitly rupture the miasma of Whiteness permeating U.S. institutions, including public school classrooms and universities: Which students populate classes in which curriculum consists of rote memorization of the facts and "laws" of science, for example, and which ones are placed in the position to generate theories and test their own scientific hypotheses? And what notions about differentiated curriculum for various groups undergird these course distinctions? We might ask, How can you, as a prospective and practicing teacher, dismantle such notions about students and about what constitutes appropriate curriculum for them? How do you, as a prospective and practicing teacher who is White and whose family has achieved or is achieving middle-class status, benefit from such differentiated course constructions? How might those who are teachers of color or those who are women or those whose families are not monied characterize their own or others' experiences in such classes differentiated in curriculum?

Further, whom we accept into teacher education programs does matter. If students from all backgrounds are to have a chance to achieve in school and meet their dreams, they must have more teachers who represent their cultural backgrounds and can understand who students are and the promise that they all hold. Current demographic projections, however, make us believe that White teachers will continue to dominate the teacher work force. It is critically important then, that these teachers have the opportunity to interrogate their identities, be mentored with care, placed in culturally diverse settings where they can critically reflect on who they are and what they do, and engage in course work that challenges the thinking with which they enter teaching.

Finally, what do these stories from one prospective teacher's thinking and practices tell us? First and foremost, that it is possible to change the thinking, talking, and teaching of White prospective teachers, even in disciplines in which some scholars have noted an unwillingness for those content-area teachers to think about themselves as engaging in teaching for equity; second, that program cohesion is critical for such work to be successful and that attention to the social languages engaged in by faculty and staff are significant for student learning; and, as Alison herself said, this work reminds us that teacher education is a never-finalized project, and that it is "a continual process of growth and development" providing fertile ground on which we can build in the future.

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Notes

1. The names of all teachers, university faculty, staff, students, community, university, and schools are pseudonyms.

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