DINGLE, JESSE M. Let the Dialogue Begin: Diversity and the White Preservice Teacher. (Under the direction of Dr. John Pettitt and Dr. Edgar Boone.)

The purpose of this qualitative study has been to explore the various experiences that may have an influence on the perceived readiness of White preservice teachers (students at Deep South College) to successfully teach and communicate with cultural minority students. Ten White preservice teachers who attend a private, 4-year, liberal arts college, were given the opportunity to describe in their own words, in-depth insight into the various everyday cultural life experiences of White preservice teachers.

This study revealed that these women had their own unique traits and cultural life stories. Their friendships, educational, personal, and religious experiences all played a vital role in shaping how they viewed their cultural selves as well as how they acted in a multicultural world. These factors have also had a profound effect on the professional development of each woman. Further the interviewees revealed that prior to this research; none of them had ever really had to think about who they were racially. The issue was a non-issue. For most of their lives family, friends, and the media had helped to shape their normative view of Whiteness and what it actually means to be White.
Another important aspect that surfaced over the course of this research was the perceived importance of opportunities for White preservice teachers to have field experiences in which they can go into communities which are much like the ones in which they will ultimately be teaching. For almost every single woman in this study that meant going into a situation where they are the cultural minority.
LET THE DIALOGUE BEGIN:

DIVERSITY AND THE WHITE PRESERVICE TEACHER

by

JESSE M. DINGLE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

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2005

APPROVED BY:

Co-chair of Advisory Committee - Co-chair of Advisory Committee
This research study is dedicated to my mother Mary and my wife Lynn. This educational journey could not have been completed without either one of them. I am very much aware that this milestone in my life has been made possible because of their love and support. One of my heart’s desires has always been to make my mother proud, this is for you Mamma.

Dr. John Pettitt,

I have always believed that if your mind you can conceive it, if within your heart you can believe it, then I know you can achieve it. This I Know. Because of your faith, your guidance, your belief I have achieved. Thank you for not allowing me to give up. Thank you for encouraging me to always look beyond the obvious in my quest for truth.

In Gratitude,

Jesse Dingle
BIOGRAPHY

Jesse M. Dingle, the son of Jessie and Mary A. Dingle, is a native North Carolinian. After completing high school in Cumberland County, North Carolina, he attended Appalachian State University and earned a Bachelor’s degree in Education. He continued his education at The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and graduated with a Master’s degree in School Administration. He is currently enrolled in the doctoral program at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina where he is completing an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration.

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To those who have helped me to achieve the unachievable, reach the unreachable, and dream the dream, I say thank you. My sincere appreciation to my family for their support with special thanks to

My Advisory Committee

Reverend Dr. David C. Forbes
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race—Abraham Lincoln 1858 (Mazel, 1998, p. 37)

This study focuses on White preservice teachers at a southern college. The study sought to give voice to White preservice teachers as they have instructional relationships and interactions with children of color. These preservice teachers were involved in a multicultural experience in a real K-5 setting. The purpose of this study was to explore the idea of diversity and multicultural education through the lens of the White preservice teacher. This study gave voice to these young prospective teachers as they prepared to go out into classroom settings that are becoming increasingly more diverse. Through this study various questions were raised as they relate to the perceived preparedness of these White preservice teachers to teach children from minority groups. Are there experiences that have an impact on the cultural efficacy of these perspective teachers? How do these prospective teachers give voice to any self-perceived/intended
changes? Through these questions, this study sought to help inform programming for future educational learning experiences for all preservice teachers.

"Why do we need to think about Black people when Black people aren’t around? A White preservice education student wrote this question on an anonymous course evaluation for an educational psychology course that I teach at a northern New England college campus” (Dilworth, 1998, p. 102). For many White preservice teachers the old adage “out of sight, out of mind” is still very true as it relates to their relationships and interactions with people of color.

The necessity of preparing all preservice teachers to work with culturally diverse students in culturally diverse settings should be clear. The racial composition of the group entering the teaching force is overwhelmingly White, with African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans together representing less than 10% of prospective teachers and steadily declining (Dilworth, 1998).

One of the ways colleges and universities try to prepare preservice teachers for possible future culturally diverse classroom experience is through mandated diversity or multicultural classes. These classes have become the standard means by which preservice teachers are equipped to go forth
into their culturally, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse classrooms. It is here, that for the first time many White preservice teachers come face to face with the distinct possibility that many of their future students will not look like they do and that their assumptions about such students cannot be taken for granted. At this point it is important to note that the few prospective minority teachers who enter into the teaching profession cannot assume that by virtue of the pigmentation of their skin they are “qualified” to effectively reach and teach all the diverse students they may have in their classrooms.

It is an understatement and broadly noted principle in education that the role of the classroom teacher is critical. On February 29, 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) warned that the United States was moving towards two societies: one Black, one White—separate and unequal. Twenty years later, the Kerner Commission repeated its concerns that, while some gains have been made, the educational and economic gaps between African Americans and Whites were, in fact, wider than they had been in 1968 (Kendall, 1996). In short, racism is still one of the most crippling diseases from which this country suffers. Racism affects each of us, regardless of color, race, class,
gender, age or sexual orientation (Kendall, 1996). Education can be a powerful force in the struggle to eliminate all forms of institutional discrimination. The role of the classroom teacher can be pivotal in the reduction and subsequent elimination of racism. Kendall (1996) holds the following values with respect to the role of the teacher:

1. Teachers are models for children; as models they should show respect and concern for all people.

2. Teachers provide experiences through which children can begin to develop their own values.

3. Teachers encourage children to explore, initiate, question, grapple with tough questions, and to be active rather than passive learners.

4. Teachers are active participants in children’s learning.

5. Teachers pass their own values and attitudes on to children both intentionally and unintentionally; therefore, it is important that they be keenly aware of their own attitudes and values. (p. 122)

Preservice teachers need to be able to identify their own attitudes and biases and examine ways in which these attitudes could affect their teaching. Furthermore, preservice teachers should explore a multicultural approach to education
regardless of the racial or ethnic composition of their classes (Kendall, 1996). Kendall suggests children have the right to experience the affirmation of individual differences and respect for the cultural heritages of all people.

But what is the best way to help these preservice teachers identify their own attitudes and biases which could affect their teaching? If such a task is attempted how do we know that it is successful, or has made a difference in the attitude, knowledge base, or beliefs of the preservice teacher? This study posed the following questions: (a) Are there personal, social, or educational experiences that White preservice teachers connect with enhancing their cultural awareness?; (b) In what ways are White preservice teachers able to relate their personal, social, or educational experiences to particular multicultural or cross-cultural experiences?

**Statement of the Problem**

Why study White preservice teachers? The National Education Association (NEA) (Grant, 1999) reports that 88% of the teachers in the United States are White. In addition, according to the U.S Department of Commerce data, more than one-third of students in today’s public schools are people of
color. By the year 2025, at least half of our students will be of color (Grant, 1999). A “new majority” of students is emerging consisting of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific Americans, Arab Americans, and Native Americans (Grant, 1999). Meanwhile, only 13% of their teachers are minorities. More than 40% of the schools across America have no teachers of color on staff (Grant, 1999). It is also interesting to note that while teachers of color play an essential and critical role in our schools, the reality is that these educators comprise only a modest proportion of the faculty. This means children from diverse backgrounds are generally being taught by White women from middle-class backgrounds (Grant, 1999). Again this fact begs the question, how do we go about preparing these preservice teachers to meet the needs of diverse student populations? While this obvious question looms large, only a small amount of time, energy, and financial resources are devoted to exploring potential answers (Grant, 1999).

Despite this urgent situation, teacher education has in some ways been slow to respond to a shifting demographic landscape. Aside from a handful of initiatives to increase the number of minorities in the teaching profession, most teacher education programs have taken limited steps to address the
growing racial/ethnic imbalance between the teaching force and the student body (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). There is not much evidence of serious work to address issues of race/ethnicity, class, and language in the teacher education curriculum. Such a lack of action may perpetuate a persistent achievement gap between White middle-class, English-speaking children and their poor and minority peers (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Teacher education programs have typically responded to the growing diversity among K-12 students by adding a course or two on multicultural education but leaving the rest of the curriculum largely intact (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study seeks to understand the experiences of White preservice teachers in order to address the growing diversity that is seen in our schools today.

One of the external forces driving the dialogue about cultural diversity and differences is the idea of privilege, particularly White privilege. Kendall (1996) states that White privilege is hard to see for those who are fortunate enough to have been born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted. Furthermore, the subject is extremely difficult to talk about because many White people do not feel powerful or that they have privileges that others do not. It is sort of like asking
fish to notice water or birds to discuss air. For those who have privileges based on race, gender, class, physical ability, sexual orientation, or age, it just is—it’s normal (Kendall, 1996).

Another factor affecting the need to study White preservice teachers is the issue of student achievement, in particular the achievement gap. While overall achievement scores, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have remained relatively constant since the late 1960s, the gap between White and minority students has widened. More specifically, White students have improved in math proficiency at higher rates than have minority students. And while all students have experienced a decrease in reading proficiency, the decrease has been more severe for minority than White students (Spera, 1997). Is there a connection here? Does the race of the teacher make a difference in the achievement of the student? More specifically, does the race of the teacher, especially if the child is African American and the teacher is White; make a difference in the academic achievement of the child? While this study is not a study of Black student achievement, the research does show that there is an interaction between the race of the student and the race of the teacher. This interaction and its connection to
learning will be addressed in fuller detail later on in this chapter.

I believe race, of student and teacher, can and does make a difference. Therefore, educators, both Black and White must strive to eliminate those cultural classroom factors that may alienate their students. A state advisory commission, the North Carolina Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, set forth recommendations for closing the achievement gap. One of the recommendations was that State education officials should explain how they expect teachers to meet new standards on teaching diverse groups of students. The Commission also recommended that the State pay for special seminars and courses in teacher training programs to improve teacher understanding of minority families and cultures (Simmons, 2001).

Given the growing minority presence among school-age children and the recent and historical emphasis on multicultural understanding among educators and policymakers, there is clearly a need to study preservice teachers and White preservice teachers in particular, as we seek to discover ways to increase the cultural efficacy of these prospective teachers. This increased cultural efficacy should have a
positive impact on the academic achievement of culturally diverse children.

### Purpose of the Research

This study is intended to give voice to preservice White teachers’ beliefs about race, culture, and their potential ability to teach students who may not look like themselves. The main interest is in hearing what they, White preservice teachers, have to say with their own voices. This instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) explored the ideas, thoughts, and beliefs of preservice White teachers as they prepare to teach in school settings that have become increasingly culturally diverse. The preservice teachers in this study are students at Deep South College, a small, private, all female, 4-year liberal arts college in the southern United States. These students are all participants in SOC 335 Race and Ethnic Relations, a required major class.

### Research Questions

At the core of this study lay several research questions:

1. How do White preservice teachers express their sense of cultural awareness?

2. What are some of the experiences that may lead White preservice teachers to believe their sense of cultural
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awareness has been affected, either in a positive or negative sense?

**Significance of the Study**

One of the reasons this study is so relevant is that it explored an alternative to one of the mainstays of multicultural education, which is adding a course or two to the curriculum. While separate courses on multicultural education play an important role in preparing teachers to teach students of diverse backgrounds, there is growing evidence that this add-on approach to diversity does not go far enough (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Simply adding a multicultural education course or two to the teacher education curriculum may not adequately prepare White preservice teachers for a changing student population.

Is there a way to *infuse* multicultural education throughout the preservice teacher education curriculum? Although work in this area has begun, it is still not clear what this infusion might entail and how best to accomplish it (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study looked at diversity from the lens of the White preservice teacher. It gave voice to these teachers while experiencing a type of multicultural
infusion. Through this infusion, these teachers had an opportunity to examine their own attitudes toward diversity.

This study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge that addresses preservice teachers’ beliefs about race and in doing so give pertinent information to university programs that wish to fulfill current national accreditation standards for teacher education. In the most recent manual of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), there are standards for use by institutions as they respond to the NCATE accreditation requirements for program review. The Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation contain standards for teacher candidates as they complete an elementary teacher preparation program in an NCATE accredited school, college or department of education. Of special note in the newly adopted standards (October 16, 1999 and February 5, 2000) is a section that deals with attention to issues of elementary school student diversity. The standard reads:

3b. Adaptation to diverse students—Candidates (elementary preservice teachers), understand how elementary students differ in their development and approach to learning, and create instructional
opportunities that are adapted to diverse students. (NCATE, 2000)

Supporting explanation: Candidates understand and can identify differences in approaches to learning and performance, including different learning styles, and ways students demonstrate learning. Candidates plan instructional tasks and activities appropriate to the needs of students who are culturally diverse and those with exceptional learning needs in elementary schools. They are able to apply knowledge of the richness of contributions from diverse cultures to each content area studied by elementary students. (NCATE, 2000, p. 16)

This standard points directly to the need for all preservice elementary school teachers to address the needs of culturally diverse learners. Any university that is NCATE accredited must have courses and programs in place that address this standard.

However, there are other reasons that this research is significant. As previously stated, our classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. Many teachers are therefore being asked to be more culturally responsive and sensitive in all areas of classroom life (Miranda & Scott, 1994), but many of them have
neither the training nor experience to accomplish the task. While attitudes vary about multicultural education in general and also about specific multicultural education approaches, many educators recognize the need for multicultural preparation of teachers at both the preservice and the inservice levels (Miranda & Scott, 1994). Thus, one of the considerations that makes this particular area so significant is the fact that although many educators may recognize the need for the multicultural preparation of the preservice teacher, we still have not sought to understand how White preservice teachers struggle with cultural awareness so that potential “cultural infusion” programs can be informed by this understanding.

There is yet another compelling reason that this research is so significant. By any measure—SATs, end-of-grade tests, graduation rates—African American students trail their peers, regardless of family income or education (Simmons, 2001). According to Simmons, more than four of every 10 Black students can’t do the math expected of them. Approximately half don’t read at grade level. One out of two Black students leaves high school without a diploma. If this were the record of a single school district, its classrooms would be considered academically bankrupt. But it is not the record of
a district. It is the record of an entire state. It is a measure of North Carolina’s efforts to educate the 400,000 African American children in its public schools (Simmons, 2001). However, these are not the numbers that describe public education for White families. Among White students, four out of five are doing grade level work (Simmons, 2001). It appears that the majority groups of students have some type of academic advantage over their minority peers. Does the way in which the teacher relates to students of different races have any impact on minority student achievement? If so, then is there something in the cultural preparation or training of preservice teachers, Black and White, which is lacking that may in some way directly affect minority student academic performance? This study was intended to begin to bridge this gap in knowledge.

I believe that the classroom teacher not only sets the academic tone but the cultural tone of the classroom as well. Most policymakers, parents, educators, and researchers now generally agree that nothing is more closely tied to student achievement and underachievement than the preparation, support, and quality of classroom teachers (Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, 2001). It follows then, that nothing is more critical to efforts to
close the achievement gap than making certain that every student, especially those who have been traditionally underserved by public schools, has access to competent, caring, qualified teachers in schools organized for success (Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, 2001, p. 1).

The Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps concluded that even beginning teachers are more likely to be successful in teaching all children when they themselves have been taught by teacher educators who model what we want them to be (Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, 2001). The Commission went on to state:

University teacher educators themselves must have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully teach diverse student populations, and, they themselves must be comfortable addressing the uncomfortable issues of race, religion, and ethnicity in the classroom and in society. The Commission felt that because most often university faculty members are selected based on knowledge of their discipline and not on their knowledge of how to teach their discipline to culturally different
audiences, teacher preparation candidates have been put at a disadvantage. (Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, 2001)

It is this reason, above all others, that makes this study so significant. Through this study I hope to inform White preservice teachers, university faculty members, and lawmakers about the possible change that can occur in the preconceived knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that some White, elementary preservice teachers may have about the diverse cultural groups they will encounter in their perspective classrooms.

**Educational Philosophy**

Noted diversity and multicultural expert James Banks (2001) states that even as the nation’s students become increasingly diverse, most of the nation’s teachers remain White, middle-class, and female. Banks identifies several different approaches that can be used to integrate cultural content into the school and university curriculum:

1. **Level 1: The Contributions Approach**: Focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements.
2. Level 2: The Additive Approach: Content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure.

3. Level 3: The Transformative Approach: The structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

4. Level 4: The Social Action Approach: Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them (Banks, 2001, p. 84).

For any type of cultural curriculum to be effective it must be transformative. The major goal of a transformative curriculum is to foster multicultural literacy that helps students to know, care, and act in ways that will develop and foster a democratic and just society in which all groups experience cultural democracy and cultural empowerment. Banks (1999) goes on to note that knowledge alone will not help students to develop an empathetic, caring commitment to humane and democratic change. Through dialogue and inquiry I believe we can begin to address the question of how best to prepare White teachers to work in diverse settings. This cannot be accomplished by looking at teacher preparation in isolation. Instead, it is a process that must be examined in a larger
context, via an investigation of the experiences, values, and beliefs that students and faculty bring to the teaching-learning arena.

Limitations of the Study

This study provides a snapshot of the lives of a select group of White preservice teachers in a single setting. Thus, these findings cannot be directly generalized. These findings can inform, based on comparisons to similar circumstances. The participants in this study represent students engaged in an elementary education (K-6) licensure program.

This research has been designed with regard for the needs of the study and with those of the students. White preservice teachers are going to go into very diverse classroom settings. Participation in this study could be important to them and even more important to the children they someday may teach.

In addition to being the researcher, I am also the former principal of Charity Elementary School. This situation, of being the former principal, could create certain biases. For example, I have an in-depth knowledge of both students and staff of Charity Elementary School. This in-depth knowledge could cloud my subjectivity as a researcher. I could go into this research with a preconceived notion of what social
interactions I would see based on my own prior knowledge. I could not enter into this study without my perspective and knowledge base, but I was conscious of how this, my perspective and knowledge base, was affecting my understanding, inquires, and observations. Additionally, as former principal of Charity Elementary School, there could have been a danger of the White preservice teachers telling me “warm-fuzzy” things about the school, the staff, and the children and not giving a true representation of their thoughts, reactions, and perceptions as they interacted within the school environment. In order to guard against this particular bias I carefully recorded and transcribed all interviews with the students from Deep South College. I then provided students with copies of their transcribed interviews so they could check them for accuracy of thought and content.

Since I am the former principal I still have very close contact with the present principal as well as the teachers and many of the students. This relationship has helped to open up the doors of Charity Elementary not only to me as researcher, but to the young preservice teachers who will come from Deep South College. I am also a guest lecturer on diversity at Deep South College. As a part of this research I will be the guest
lecturer in the diversity class that I will be researching. I have been in this unpaid capacity since 1997.

Ideally, the study outcomes will inform future diversity course offerings at Deep South College and better prepare White preservice teachers to face their future students.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Why does color matter? When I hear this question, I often just sigh. Deeply. It's almost too basic a question to be answered. But the need for an explanation is symptomatic of our divisions—Christopher Edley, Jr., 1996 (Mazel, 1998, p. 125).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine relevant literature, develop the theoretical context that informs this study, and define the boundaries for exploring how White preservice teachers learn to become more culturally aware.

The literature presented addresses the history, development and focus of diversity and multicultural education in our country. Through this literature we are able to see the complexity and volatility of the whole issue of diversity and multicultural education, especially in the areas of adult and public school education. In various instances the literature points out the plethora of approaches that have been tried in addressing the issues of cultural diversity and multicultural awareness, not just in education, but also in society at large. These are issues that have occupied the agendas of scholars and politicians alike. My review of the literature suggests that two points remain painfully clear: (a) We have a problem when it comes to education and issues of diversity and
multiculturalism; and (b) There is no consensus on how to solve it. It is against such a backdrop that this research is framed. The research shows that various approaches have been tried to address the issue of diversity and the continuing impact that it has not only on education but on society as a whole. It is the hope of this author that this research will provide additional information for decision makers in education, who are searching for answers to the diversity question. Each section of the literature review will inform and seek to frame the basis for this research.

The first section focuses upon the literature surrounding the history of higher education institutions in relation to diversity and multicultural education. This literature specifically presents the various approaches of teacher education as they relate to diversity and multicultural education. The next section looks at the influence of adult education theories and how they have helped to shape and redefine various perspectives on attitude, knowledge, and behavior of adult learners of racial majority groups. The final section examines how the literature informs programming issues related to diversity and multicultural teacher education.
The scope of this literature review has been focused on and limited to literature about diversity, multicultural education, and teacher preparation programs. Additionally, the literature was selected as a means of critically examining diversity, multicultural education, and the preparation of preservice teachers.

Another focus of this literature review is how colleges and universities have sought to engage preservice teachers in issues of diversity and multicultural education as a part of their teacher education preparation. This review is limited to the time-span of the period. Searches were limited to the years 1995 to present. Whereas the concept of multicultural education has been around in some form since 1973, multicultural teacher education is relatively new (McCarthy & Willis, 1995). Many of the studies on this subject are just beginning to inform the policies, practices, and curriculums of teacher preparation courses at colleges and universities. Some of the most recent research is beginning to offer qualitative descriptions of programs that seek to address the multicultural educational needs of majority race preservice teachers as well as efforts to provide preservice field experiences that offer authentic interactions between this group and minority race students.
Multicultural Education

Influence Over the Years

Multicultural education emerged in the early 1970s as a powerful challenge to the Eurocentric foundations of the American school curriculum. It is a product of a particular historical conjuncture of relations among governmental entities, contending racial minority and majority groups, educators, and policy intellectuals when the discourse over schools became increasingly racialized (McCarthy & Willis, 1995).

It is, however, interesting to note that for a brief period during the early 1960s to the early 1970s, subordinate racial groups were influencing U.S. educational history. These groups fought a limitedly successful but very intense war for position within the institutions of education themselves. This is a period that McCarthy and Willis (1995) calls the “glorious decade of Black studies” (p. 98). Of particular significance were the connections that subordinate school critics made between knowledge and power. These critics pointed specifically to the deep involvement of traditional, canonical school knowledge in the legitimation of authority and inequity in society. In this sense canonical knowledge was
official knowledge, which undergirded official stories about social stratification and minority educational marginalization (McCarthy & Willis, 1995).

In contrast to the dominant preoccupations of traditional educators, some African Americans and other groups of people of color emphasized a variety of transformative themes, insisting that curriculum and educational policy address the vital questions of community control, distribution of power and representation in schools, and the status of colonized people and oppressed cultural identities in curriculum and social arrangements (McCarthy & Willis, 1995). However, within the last two decades these transformative themes in the multicultural movement have been steadily “sucked back into the system” (McCarthy & Willis, 1995, p. 115). As departments of education, textbook publishers, and intellectual entrepreneurs push more normative themes of cultural understanding and sensitivity training, the actual implementation of a critical emancipatory multiculturalism in the school curriculum and in pedagogical and teacher-education practices in the university has been effectively deferred (McCarthy & Willis, 1995).

In American history, dominant cultures have shaped the larger contexts and substance of all learning in society.
Higher education is no exception. As emerging cultures clash with dominant ones, an evolutionary process takes place. One of the common ways that institutions of higher education have attempted to manage these tensions has been by promoting successful people of color (Castenell, 1998). Another attempt that emerged was the establishment of minority cultural centers. The first ethnic minority cultural centers to appear on predominantly White campuses were established in the mid-1960s in response to the alienation and isolation expressed by the first wave of racially conscious and secure African American students. In many instances, those centers had few philosophical underpinnings and were viewed by many with suspicion, if not hostility (Young, 1991). Over time and with careful nurturing by students, faculty, and staff, the general university community came to see the ethnic minority cultural center as having educational value and a place within the structure of student activities, services, and programs on campus. Although some universities established centers without sound theoretical underpinnings, others saw the establishment of such centers as part of their commitment to educating all students and implementing educational justice (Young, 1991).

During the mid-1980s, goals shifted from a press for mere access to a desire for meaningful minority participation
within campuses of higher education. Just as there was a evolution of the Civil Rights Movement from a struggle to end segregation to a fight to establish integration so, too, there was a shift from increasing the numbers of minority group members on campuses to changing the campuses so that they were more accommodating to minority group members. That is, the goal became to change a traditionally homogeneous White institution into one that was heterogeneous or at least less racist (Valverde, 1998).

The evolved or newer strategies served to combat racist policies and practices vested in campuses and to forge campuses that included traits and events that reflected a pluralistic society (Valverde, 1998). As a result of these two goals, numerous scholars and individuals who had experienced mere inclusion on monocultural campuses developed strategies that would expose the non-inclusive realities of such higher education campuses.

This second goal led to another set of strategies—that of creating a climate on campuses that would help traditionally excluded populations feel more comfortable and be more successful; more minority students would graduate, more minority faculty members would be gain promotions and tenure. Strategies to create multicultural campuses are, for the most
part, internally conceived and controlled. Valverde (1998) notes that at the beginning of the goal shift (from access to campus modification), the strategies were driven by incentives provided mostly by external funding sources, for example, federal agencies or private foundations. In general, administrators and faculty have been motivated to put in place strategies that will accommodate a diverse student body because government leaders, private influences, regents, or system chancellors have declared such activities a priority (Valverde, 1998).

**The Effect of Multicultural Education on Teacher Preparation Programs**

All of the previously mentioned organizational structures have directly influenced multicultural approaches to teacher education preparation programs. For example, beginning in January 1979, colleges and universities applying for accreditation of their professional education programs by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education have been required to show evidence of planning for multicultural education in their curricula. While multicultural education has been, in many forms, a part of America since the turn of the century, the idea of multicultural teacher education is relatively new (Goodwin, 1997). In 1973, the American
Association of Colleges of Teacher Education’s (AACTE) first Commission on Multicultural Education issued the following policy statement:

Multicultural education programs for teachers are more than special courses or special learning experiences grafted onto the standard program. The commitment to cultural pluralism must permeate all areas of the educational experience provided for prospective teachers. (Goodwin, 1997, p. 77)

This statement signaled to the AACTE membership that teachers needed specific preparation to teach culturally and racially diverse citizenry.

The Commission’s work triggered subsequent changes in NCATE standards by 1979, heralding an era of greater accountability whereby rhetorical commitments to the notion of multicultural teacher education were bolstered by substantive actions in order to fulfill professional requirements (Goodwin, 1997). With this impetus, many colleges and universities have included multicultural education in their requirements for preservice teacher preparation (Paccione & McWhorter 1999). Still, Paccione and McWhorter (1999) found that only 56% of universities were in compliance with the NCATE mandate for multicultural education. Twenty years after
the NCATE mandate, it appears that neither states nor teacher education programs have made substantive progress toward complying.

Even today, NCATE is striving to generate standards that address the issue of cultural diversity in teacher education programs. In the newest standards that were adopted by NCATE in May of 2000, Standard 4 speaks directly to the issue of diversity:

The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools. (NCATE, 2000, p. 10)

NCATE recognizes that America’s classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. One of the goals of Standard 4 is the development of educators who can help all students learn and who can teach from multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The basic idea is for the college or university to provide opportunities for
candidates to understand the role of diversity and equity in the teaching and learning process (NCATE, 2000).

It is important to note that the idea of including diversity training in preservice teacher education programs began gaining currency in the early 1970s. The belief that teachers, rather than students, needed “fixing” gained currency within the academic community, which began to re-examine previously held convictions about the disadvantaged nature of visible racial/ethnic children (Goodwin, 1997).

The idea that teachers needed to receive specific preparation to work effectively with a diverse population began to take hold as the education profession began to define goals and curricula for multicultural teacher education. For example, Goodwin (1997) outlined three components for multicultural teacher education: (1) knowledge, whereby teachers become literate about ethnic group experiences; (2) attitudes “to help teachers examine their existing attitudes and feelings towards ethnic, racial, and cultural differences”; and (3) skills to translate their knowledge and sensitivities into school programs, curricular designs, and classroom instructional practices (Goodwin, 1997, p. 227).

Other approaches to higher education, multicultural teacher education and diversity vary in nature and scope. For
example, research findings on the relationship between learner performance and teacher response to diversity are of special significance to the Consortium of Urban Professional Development and Technology Centers, in Dallas, Texas. The Consortium’s mission is the preparation of teachers who will be especially equipped to produce academic success among urban learners (Ligons, Rosado, & Houston, 1998). Additionally, 15 Consortium outcomes frame the evolving teacher education programs. Of those, one of the most important is that preservice teachers demonstrate cultural literacy and responsiveness:

The capacity to interact comfortably with persons from various ethnic and cultural groups and the ability to make culturally based instructional and curricular adaptations that enhance students’ opportunities to succeed. (Paccione & McWhorter 1999, p. 104)

The expressed desire is for preservice teachers to be able to interact successfully with students from a plethora of ethnic and racial backgrounds, and within that interaction meet their academic needs.

One of the criticisms of preservice teacher education is its lack of rigor and its failure to prepare teachers for the
real world of education (Paccione & McWhorter, 1999). Paccione and McWhorter (1999) reports that casual conversations with in-service teachers reveal a universal disappointment with their preservice education. Most teachers report that the only value in their preservice education was the actual immersion of student teaching (Paccione, 1999). The frustration with the status quo in teacher education led to the development of an experimental program at Colorado State University called Project Promise (Paccione & McWhorter, 1999). Because of its success, Project Promise was designated by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education as a Program of Excellence in teacher preparation (Paccione & McWhorter, 1999). Students in Project Promise receive instruction and coursework in 3-7 week blocks, after which they are engaged in field experiences. In addition, there are four field experiences, one in each of four different contexts: rural, urban, junior high school, and senior high school. The typical rural field experience provides diversity by way of a large immigrant farming community. The urban field experience provides a rich exposure to Black and Hispanic cultures in an inner city environment (Paccione & McWhorter 1999).

Xu (2000) offered excellent advice as he described his own research results with “preservice teachers.” The
participants of this particular study were 20 preservice teachers in their early 20s enrolled in a teacher education program in a major university in the Southwest. Four of the 20 identified themselves as minorities, the rest were self-identified as White. The data revealed that most preservice teachers’ understandings of diversity remain at the tangible level of culture, such as knowledge of students’ cultural values (Goodwin, 1997). Xu (2000) also reported that on a certain level, “the participants of this study may still see race in a Black-White paradigm and notice primarily cultural differences in other children of color.” Xu (2000) continued by noting, “an additional effect of seeing race in a Black-White paradigm (a paradigm in which Blacks are racialized and Whites are not) is that White teachers may fail to see culture in their Black students and note possible ethnic differences” (p. 138). It is statements such as the aforementioned that points to a real need to examine the development of racial attitudes and beliefs of White preservice teachers as they prepare to teach increasingly diverse classrooms.

The necessity of preparing all preservice teachers to work with culturally diverse students in culturally diverse settings should be clear. The role of the higher education institution is to prepare preservice teachers to gain
familiarity with and competence in infusing multicultural content into the curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade (Vavrus & Ozcan, 1998).

Vavrus and Ozcan (1998) states that it is unfortunate but true that teachers tend to teach as they themselves were taught. Thus, the responsibilities of higher education in preparing teachers for the 21st century are awesome. Our society is faced with the daunting challenge of finding creative ways to face the increasing diversity among the student body in elementary and secondary schools. This diversity is a compelling reason for schools of education to transform the process of preparing the next generation of teachers. Neito (2002) believes that approaches which build on the experiences of teacher education students and which help them become better teachers of our diverse student populations in elementary and secondary schools will soon become the norm in teacher preparation programs. I’m not so sure. One of the reasons this study is so relevant is because universities are so slowly moving in the direction of providing the experiences preservice teachers need to help them to become better teachers of diverse student populations.

As we look at current higher education approaches in terms of philosophies and intended outcomes it appears that
the educational community has not yet arrived. Knowledge of diversity, skills for effectively working with diverse populations, and transforming attitudes toward diversity are all necessary goals for the preservice teacher (Paccione & McWhorter 1999). As Paccione and McWhorter (1999) indicates, two of the three most compelling reasons to prepare preservice teachers for student diversity can be addressed in the cognitive domain: that of acquiring new knowledge about different cultures and learning pedagogical skills related to learning styles. The third, and in his view the most compelling reason to prepare preservice teachers for diversity, lies in the affective domain: racial attitudes and beliefs about culturally diverse students. Attention to this domain shifts the focus from knowledge and skill development to personal beliefs and attitudes. This area, more than any other forms the framework and substance of my research. I sought to find out through the words of the preservice teachers what kinds of experiences might have led to shifts in attitude, beliefs, and knowledge as relates to cultural diversity and awareness. Thus, the process through which individuals change their personal beliefs and attitudes becomes an important element of preservice teacher preparation. This type of approach seeks to make what is in
essence a systemic change to the knowledge, attitude, and belief systems of the preservice teacher. This is a very different approach from the early 1970s and 1980s (Paccione & McWhorter 1999).

The Adult Education Classroom

Issues of Race and Diversity

It is here that the literature holds significant relevance for this study. For it is in the adult education classroom that issues of race, diversity, and multiculturalism may be addressed as White preservice teachers prepare for teaching careers. It is in the adult education classroom where knowledge, and to some extent values and norms, are passed on to prospective teachers. The literature suggests that try as we may, we can no more overlook the effect of race and issues of diversity in adult education, than we can ignore issues of pedagogy and efficacy. It is here, in the adult education classroom, that this study will begin. It is here that I sought, through the voices of the White preservice teachers, to discern and give meaning to the multicultural educational experiences of such prospective teachers.

In the world of public education and teacher preparation, one very common and persistent issue is how to help preservice
teachers in a predominantly White teacher education program consider race as a factor in preparing to teach in our ever-changing culture.

Johnson-Bailey (2002) suggests that although educators and practitioners acknowledge race as a variable that affects teaching and learning, they do so without fully acknowledging how race shapes the ways in which adult education is planned and practiced. To further complicate matters, despite the stated good intentions of researchers and practitioners in the field, adult education has not succeeded in accomplishing the lofty goals of empowering those lacking basic skills and in bringing all citizens to the table of equal access and opportunity (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). “The field of adult education has found that the very barriers that have crippled adult education’s goals, including race, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, continue to divide and disable society in general” (Johnson-Bailey, 2002, p. 87).

Many variables drive the teaching and learning transaction. One of the most visible and persistent variables is race. In examining race, it is necessary to establish a working definition that is applicable to American society. According to Johnson-Bailey (2002) race is a social construct
used to organize people into groups based on their physical appearance. In addition, racial clustering produces prejudice or biased ideas concerning the intellectual, physical and moral tenets of group members. Johnson-Bailey (2002) goes on to state that although scientists agree that definitive racial codification is based on a nebulous set of physical characteristics, such classification systems stand as primary ways in which we identify people in Western Society. Admittedly, no matter how ambiguous racial classification may be, race profoundly affects how a person functions in this society (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). Therefore, to be Asian, African American, Hispanic, Native American, or White in the adult education classroom carries a different meaning with each classification. However, in the field of adult education these arbitrary but tacitly understood distinctions are frequently ignored as educators proceed with generic praxis, literature and discourses (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

The notion of the adult education classroom as a neutral territory where a facilitator brings all participants into a shared dialogue is the archetype set forth in the literature (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). The fact that many adult education classrooms reflect the real world, with preset hierarchical power relations, remains largely unacknowledged. Whenever
Let the Dialogue Begin

someone participates in programs or classes as a student, instructor, or planner, that person brings the historical weight of race into the educational setting. It really does not matter whether we intentionally trade or naively try to discard the privilege, deficits or standpoints of racial statuses. Such ranks, authorizations, honors, suspicions, and stereotypes cannot be cast aside. They are accrued in society’s invisible hierarchical banking system of trading and bartering according to designated racial rankings (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

Adult Education Approaches to Cultural Awareness

There have been a plethora of approaches to the whole issue of how to address cultural diversity in adults. The following discussion addresses some of the more prominent approaches.

The cross-cultural training approach

Historically, questions about culture have been problematic in education. For example, the theory of cultural relativity, still somewhat troublesome within the field of anthropology, continues to raise philosophical questions within education (Stocking, 1968 as cited in York, 1997). Cultural relativity assumes that the ways people experience
the world, act within it and give meaning to life depend on culturally conditioned cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes, including the linguistic modalities that shape discourse (York, 1997). If teachers’ and students’ “ways of knowing” are culture-bound (and if the cultures of teachers and students differ), then there is no way of knowing what is true, since to determine truth we can each invoke nothing but our own cultural standards. York (1997) notes that one of the ways to address these issues of “truth” and “knowing” in adult education is through the use of cross-cultural training.

Cross-cultural training, in education as in other fields, begins with two fundamental assumptions: (a) that people living and working in one culture have difficulties when they enter another culture and (b) that the proper cognitive, affective, or behavioral training (or some combination of the three) can ameliorate the difficulty (York, 1997). The literature on cross-cultural training reveals five models that are used: (a) the social exchange model, (b) the intellectual model, (c) the awareness model, (d) the interactionist model, and (e) the environmental training model (York, 1997).

**Social exchange model**

The social exchange model uses the principles of behaviorism and behavior modification and applies them to aid
in cultural adjustment. This frequently operates in one of two ways. First, elements of operant conditioning can be used in some social context. For example, in a study outside the field of education, subjects were asked to identify which aspects of their own culture they found pleasurable (positive reinforcement) and which most disagreeable (negative reinforcement). These were then analyzed culturally until another culture tending to emphasize and downplay similar aspects of life could be found. For example, a man who enjoys American football may equally enjoy watching a soccer tournament in another country (York, 1997).

Intellectual model.

Also called the university model, (York, 1997) this model has dominated cross-cultural training in many occupational fields, including education. Predicated on the assumption that learning about a culture equips the trainee to live and work in that culture, a number of reasons account for this model’s popularity. First, it offers the trainee a breadth of knowledge, although it is culture-specific in nature; additionally it requires minimal staffing and addresses the trainee’s need to “know” about a culture. Moreover, it is transmitted in a classroom setting that is comfortable and
familiar to teacher candidates. Finally, it is rooted in
cognitive theory (York, 1997).

Some disagreement exists in education about what specific
knowledge should be imparted to teacher candidates who will
enter cross-cultural classrooms. Researchers have selected the
following, generally agreed-upon criteria: (a) social and
historical information; (b) cross-cultural sensitivity,
conflict, and assimilation theory and information; (c)
information about specific cultural patterns of thought and
behavior; and (d) culturally derived instructional and
evaluation strategies to use with minority children (York,
1997).

However, there is reasonable consensus among teacher
educators that academic success among preservice teachers does
not necessarily produce effective teachers. This same
inability to translate increased knowledge into improved
teaching performance exists with inservice teachers who are
provided with information-oriented, cross-cultural training
(York, 1997).

Awareness model

A radical departure from the social exchange and
intellectual models is the “human-relations” or “cultural
awareness” model of cross-cultural training. Arising from the
popular T-groups of the 1960s, the awareness model has been used extensively in many different kinds of occupational and social groups (York, 1997).

In education, this training has been used to explore levels of respect for other cultures, awareness of behavioral and value conflicts, cultural sensitivity, consciousness of racial prejudice, anxiety and attitudes towards authorities, ethnocentrism, and discrimination. While the training does encourage honest confrontation with significant and perhaps unconsciously felt cultural barriers, the model has three significant limitations (York, 1997).

First, although this method may dislodge deeply rooted convictions and beliefs, unless the facilitator is highly trained, participants may not progress into higher states of sensitivity and, in fact, may regress into deeper states of ethnocentrism and prejudice (York, 1997). Second, the emphasis on “genuineness” and “openness” may appeal to those Americans who share such values, but not all cultural groups respond well to such a climate. Candidates who might be effective in cross-cultural environments may resist enforced vulnerability (York, 1997). Finally, groups fail to show evidence of continuing growth in the prediction and control of results. In other words, the specification of outcomes is nebulous at
best, and trainees may not be able to shift from a culture-general, affectively oriented training session to the social behaviors and psychological interpretations required in a specific culture (York, 1997).

**Interactionist model**

Similar to the intellectual model because of its grounding in cognitive theory and its emphasis on cognitive goals, the interactionist model differs significantly only in that, rather than using cultural “experts” (such as professors, trainers, or facilitators) to disseminate information, cultural representatives or veterans of cross-cultural experiences are used instead (York, 1997). It is assumed that this interaction lowers the anxiety levels of the trainees and enables them to move easily into a new culture.

The strengths of this culture-specific method are that it uses an informal method of personal exchange which may allay trainee fears, and that the speakers are not disinterested authorities but people who actually have lived and worked in the foreign culture. However, the drawbacks are numerous. The model provides little opportunity for empirical verification. The application of this method is fragmented—many different kinds of people provide often folksy, homespun advice garnered from widely different kinds of experience (York, 1997).
Another serious and unintended outcome is described by York (1997). In a study of White teachers on a Zuni reservation, the teachers avoided all but essential contact with members of the foreign culture, choosing instead to live in a White cultural enclave. Representatives from another culture may communicate hostility or disinterest toward the newcomer. They may also provide too little information about the new culture or inaccurate information that will have to be unlearned. Cross-cultural veterans unintentionally may instill or encourage cultural misperceptions and reinforce stereotypes. This may result in a preference for cultural isolation rather than cultural immersion.

**Environmental training model**

This model, also referred to as the simulation model or the experiential learning model, emphasizes affective and behavioral goals (York, 1997). Unlike the other models, which require little or no contact with the minority culture, the trainees are active participants in the learning process from within the minority culture or a simulated minority culture. The training fosters the growth of cultural attitudes and skills that arise from and are legitimated by actual experience. Although frequently culture-specific in nature,
the model relies on a pattern of adaptation that may be applied universally.

Drawing primarily from symbolic interaction theory, environmental training requires maximum trainee participation in a culturally different context. In cross-cultural environmental training participants are encouraged to explore possible solutions to cross-cultural difficulties, to act and then assess the consequences, to acquire additional cultural information and to explore possibilities. Merely immersing trainees in a different culture, when immersion is divorced from other training methods, seems to have neutral or negative effects and does not appear to foster affective, cognitive, or behavioral effectiveness in a cross-cultural environment (York, 1997).

However, when environmental training is used in conjunction with other forms of cross-cultural training as a preparation for a supervised cultural immersion experience, the results suggest positive changes, despite idiosyncratic differences in program requirements (York, 1997).

In an environmental training study conducted by Mahan (York, 1997), 291 preservice teachers were surveyed who had completed varied predeparture cross-cultural training exercises and who had successfully completed a 17-week
cultural immersion preservice teaching session on a Native American reservation. Results suggested that cross-culturally trained teachers were more likely to experience success in subsequent teaching (measured by teacher evaluations and employment records) at a rate of 83% compared with 52% for those conventionally trained. Furthermore, cross-culturally trained teachers received offers for the teaching positions they sought at a rate of two-to-one compared with their conventionally trained peers. Finally, more than 40% of the cross-cultural teachers sought and accepted employment in schools with minority populations.

Currently, a course in multicultural education has become commonplace in teacher preparation programs around the country. Frequently, such a course is the only one that a prospective teacher is required to take to gain an understanding of diversity, particularly as it relates to schooling processes (Reyes, Santana-Capella, & Khisty, 1998). In conjunction with such courses, Wilson (1998) states that it is imperative that teacher preparation programs prepare teachers to teach more effectively in multicultural situations, that is, preservice teachers must have authentic multicultural experiences. Along with those experiences Wilson (1998) feels that higher education institutions must continue
to focus on preparing prospective teachers to better utilize parents, family, and community support services. This merger is paramount in view of the economic and social changes confronting teachers today. This shift in education of the preservice teacher is a shift in the right direction. If a preservice teacher can emotionally engage parents in the educational process of the child, then the job of the teacher, regardless of race, will be more successful.

Thus, the importance and relevance of this study and how it fits into this portion of the discussion becomes very clear. At many universities, the multicultural course is the only one most preservice teachers take. Whereas the multicultural education course attempts to meet the needs of the preservice teacher, most of the models that these courses are based on are limited in one way or another. In this study, I sought to give voice to preservice teachers in such a way that diversity and multicultural education is infused in several life experiences. If preservice teachers are only taking one course in multicultural education, that course needs to be one that truly addresses their multicultural educational needs. The course that preservice teachers are exposed to needs to be better than some of the current models.
This study explored such a possibility through such a course being offered at Deep South University.

Other Perspectives

The way we think invariably affects the way we research, write, and teach. A survey of the literature by Johnson-Bailey (2002) indicates that the majority of the field’s major studies do not incorporate gender or race as factors in the sample population. An examination of race in the major adult education textbooks, (Johnson-Bailey, 2002) used throughout the field reveals the same lack of attention to race as a variable. The literature surveyed shows that three major outlooks or stances are routinely used regarding race: the color-blind, multicultural, and social justice perspectives (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

Color-blind perspective

A survey of adult education literature will not reveal a position labeled as the color-blind outlook. However, this term seems well suited to a stance that does not acknowledge race or that views all racial issues as inconsequential when not expressed as part of any classroom or curriculum equation. This attitude, which remains oblivious to difference, is the most widely used approach among educators. Overall, race is
either not mentioned or is rarely discussed in the adult education textbooks (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). In a major survey of adult education program curricula, race was conspicuously absent, the exception being courses on cultural diversity or community education (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). In the major philosophies and concepts that drive the field, such as andragogy (Johnson-Bailey, 2002), the notion of race and the way it affects learners is not considered. From Knowles’ (1980) standpoint, climate setting more directly involves other attributes such as the physical environment. Knowles (1980) and his proponents do not recognize that the educational environment is not a neutral setting and that some learners enter the classroom in deficit positions that have been imposed by society. A clear example of how commonplace adult education practices discount race as a factor is seen in the use of small group activities. Knowles (1980) found that traditional adult education practices rest on the notion that all learners will feel comfortable with their co-learners and will therefore share ideas and opinions. Knowles (1980) went on to say that not all learners, especially Latinas and Native Americans, are enculturated to speak as individuals; rather, they are culturally grounded to consider the group as more important than the individual. In addition, Knowles naively
assumed that all participants will treat each other with respect and that differences or struggles based on racial tensions will not enter into classroom dynamics.

Unlike Knowles I believe the educational environment is not a neutral setting, and as White preservice teachers have experiences that help to vividly illustrate that very point I sought to see (through their voices) how White preservice teachers respond to potential shifts in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

Multicultural/cultural diversity perspective

Another view that has manifested itself in adult education is the multicultural or cultural diversity perspective. This position posits that society comprises different cultures that imbue their members with values, folkways, and mores and that one’s experiences can be significantly influenced by one’s cultural membership. This particular perspective calls for the recognition of the accomplishments of each culture and sees this acceptance as a way of valuing each group as a step toward bringing equity to the educational setting and potentially to the larger society. This perspective has found widespread acceptance, especially in light of globalization as an emerging research area in the
adult education component of human resource development (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

Johnson-Bailey (2002) gives an interesting example of how the field assesses the contributions of disenfranchised groups in the add-difference-and-stir approach, as seen in most adult education textbooks published in the past decade. This method refers to the way authors trivialize the significance of race in their authored or edited texts and sourcebooks by adding on a final chapter that pertains to minority concerns. These chapters are usually offered to placate the concerns of politically conscious publishers or readers to whom they would not want to appear to be exclusionary (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

In this research I attempted to bring to light just how much influence one’s values, folkways, and mores can have on the cultural worldview of White preservice teachers. Is this group able to recognize and appreciate the various accomplishments of each culture? Do they view their acceptance of other cultures as a way of cultural valuing?

Social justice perspective

This third and final outlook takes a moral position that critiques society as unjust toward minorities and other disenfranchised groups and calls for the field to remember its mission to work toward democratization. Although this message
has been present since the field’s inception, it is experiencing resurgence in direct response to the prolific writings of Afrocentric and feminist adult education scholars. The focus of this position is twofold: to highlight the moral imperative and commitment of adult education and to work to empower adult learners (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). Focusing on the workings of power as a force that drives society and the classroom, social justice advocates urge practitioners to examine the embedded privilege in classroom practices and the curriculum.

According to Johnson-Bailey (2002), if we are not working for equity in our teaching and learning environments then we as adult educators are inadvertently maintaining the status quo. There are other supporters of this premise (Johnson-Bailey, 2002) who write specifically about dialogue and how the use of voice is analogous to how power and privilege are manifested in routine classroom working: students who feel powerful and validated by the teacher or the curriculum talk, and students who feel neglected or ignored by the teacher or the curriculum remain silent.

My research sought to give voice not only to those preservice teachers who may feel marginalized in some way but also gave those who are directly responsible for the classroom
preparation of the preservice teacher a chance to talk about their role in the process of providing multicultural experiences, in the classroom as well as in the field. Are White preservice teachers in SOC 335 being encouraged through readings, discourse, and field experiences to broaden their multicultural horizons? And in doing so, do they feel a difference in how they view others who do not look like they do, particularly African American children?

**Programming Issues**

**Positionality, Teaching, and Learning**

The following issues have a direct impact on the learning of the White preservice teacher. As institutions of higher learning seek to develop programs and experiences that will help prepare prospective teachers for their future classrooms it is imperative that issues such as positionality and white privilege are addressed. The current literature points to the strong influence of both of these issues in the adult education classroom. In this body of research, these two programming issues have strong implications, as they are fairly nebulous concepts, particularly for some White preservice teachers who possibly may have never dealt with such issues before. Issues of marginalization and silencing of
students, although important, will not be addressed in this body of research. However, these issues do have implications for how perspective teachers are taught.

Overall, in adult education, teaching and learning have been predicated on a generic concept for the past 50 years, namely that all teachers and learners are the same (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). In the 1990s, several adult education scholars turned their attention to how power affects teaching and learning (Collard & Stalker, 1991). In one study, Tisdell (1993) notes that the power dynamics that exist in the classroom between instructors and learners and between learners and their co-learners are often affected by gender and racial differences. It is no secret that teachers and students will have varying sets of experiences that will be determined by their race, economic status, and language skills, as well as their personal experiences. Adult learners and teachers will each bring their own cultural “essence” to the learning and teaching situation.

Subsequent studies conducted in adult settings have shown that both teaching and learning are affected by the race of the participants. Johnson-Bailey (2002) found that women of color who taught math to adults in community college and other higher education settings offered narratives and supporting
documentation to show that they were perceived differently from their White counterparts. The data showed that often the students challenged the Black math teachers’ knowledge base, openly consulted other math teachers to check their expertise, and reported alleged teacher infractions to a supervisor. In a separate study Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) noted similar concerns. However, their study, which focused on the influences of race on teaching and learning, used both teachers and students as units of analysis. The comparative case study examined two graduate courses taught by adult education professors: one White male and one Black female assistant professor. Using Maher and Tetreault’s (1994) four themes—mastery, voice, authority, and positionality—as organizing concepts, the researchers used student evaluations, teacher observation, student and teacher interviews, syllabi, and peer debriefing as data sources. Allowing for issues of faculty rank and gender, the data indicated that the race of the teachers affected the message received by the students and the class interactions between instructors and students and between students and their classmates. Although the White male professor had race as a central class topic, the learners never perceived him as pressing an agenda. In addition, they never questioned his competence, fairness, and classroom
management. The Black female professor, who did not have race as a central topic, was seen as having an agenda that overtly supported racial equity. Other important findings in this study have particular implications for adult educators. Analyses revealed that White male students experienced a high degree of comfort when they were free to talk without being checked and when they were called on to serve as group leaders. In environments where the instructor did not regulate power issues, the White males were permitted to claim their culturally ascribed power roles of leadership. Conversely, disenfranchised learners were direct in expressing how uncomfortable they were in a classroom setting where the teacher did not control power dynamics. However, they reported a significant level of comfort when they were allowed voice and felt that the instructor valued their opinions. In this particular study, Black learners felt that they were allowed to thrive when the teacher monitored who talked in class and ensured that there was ample communication space for all students (Johnson-Bailey, 2002).

The literature shows conclusively that learning environments are not neutral sites; they are instead driven in large part by the positionalities of the instructors and learners, with a conspicuous component of the makeup being
race (Johnson-Bailey, 2002). Race is seen as a critical lens for assessing classroom teaching and learning experiences. The dimension is multifaceted; the race of both the instructor and the students drive the dynamic of interactions that take place in a teaching and learning environment.

The last point in this particular section points directly to the heart of this research. The idea that the race of both the student and the teacher can have a direct impact on student achievement is not a new one. However, how much of a role will the multicultural or diversity training that a White preservice teacher receives at the university level impact her ability to make race less of a negative factor? This research study sought to inform this discussion.

**White Privilege**

Privilege is defined as any unearned asset or benefit by virtue of being born with a particular characteristic or into a particular class (Rocco & West, 1998). Privilege permeates our total being, often becoming a part of our implicit knowledge, and making its discovery a strenuous exercise.

Power, access, status, credibility, and normality are all manifestations of privilege. Determinants of privilege are attributes that shape our experience by defining who we are.
The manifestations of privilege and determinants as personal attributes are intertwined, forming our polyrhythmic realities (Rocco & West, 1998).

Rocco and West (1998) state that if we are to understand and interrupt the perversions and pleasure of power, privilege, and marginalization, then we must allow these voices, once marginalized, to be heard and centered. Adult educators must understand their role in perpetuating current power structures. The dilemma of not experiencing a phenomenon is that a person may be unaware of its existence or diminish its significance because he or she has never seen it.

Privilege gives access to segments of our society denied to people without privilege. An example of access is that participants in adult education are primarily White, middle class, and educated. Members of communities, formed around determinants of privilege, often fail to recognize that others do not have access to their world. This failure is not just a lack of information; it reflects not wanting to know (Rocco & West, 1998).

Rocco and West (1998) point out that Whites do not experience themselves as defined by another race’s actions and attitudes toward them because of their skin color. In contrast, DuBois (1903/1989) notes that Blacks have a double
consciousness, growing up looking at themselves through the eyes of Whites and being conscious themselves through their own lenses.

Hartsock’s (1983) theory of standpoint epistemology describes the coping and survival mechanism that occurs when members of marginalized cultures learn to survive in the dominant culture and be convincing in their primary culture. Whites do not understand the stress this dual identity puts on a person, nor can they imagine the negative images a black child or a gay child grows up with as a first means of identification.

The whole notion of privilege has direct implications for adult education. When the adult educator understands that privilege allows some to be heard while silencing others, he/she can then look for ways to avoid silencing behaviors. One method of silencing students is to claim universality of theories or concepts based on White, male experience. Universality acts as a discriminatory criterion because it extends and imposes theories on all people, effectively silencing anyone whose experience is different as being the exception to the rule (Rocco & West, 1998).
Lisa Delpit (1995) gives yet another interesting spin on the issue. She relates privilege in terms of power. She states that there are five aspects of power:

1. Issues of power are enacted in the classrooms—these issues include the power of the teacher over the students, the power of the publishers of textbooks and of the curriculum developers to determine the view of the world presented, and the power of an individual or group to determine another’s intelligence or normalcy.

2. The rules of the dominant culture are a reflection of the rules of that culture. This means that success in institutions such as schools, the workplace, etc., is predicated upon acquisition of the culture of those who are in power. Children from dominant culture middle-class homes tend to do better in school than those from minority non-middle class homes because the culture of the school reflects the culture of the dominant upper and middle classes. These classes send their children to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate
within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rules of power.

3. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a “culture of power”—there are codes or rules that relate to linguistic forms, communication strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways for talking, writing, dressing and interacting.

4. If you are already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier. Members of any culture transmit information implicitly to co-members. However when implicit codes are attempted across cultures, communication frequently breaks down. Unless one has the leisure of a lifetime of “immersion” to learn the rules of a culture, explicit presentation make learning immeasurably easier.

5. Those with power are frequently least aware of, or least willing to acknowledge its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (pp. 24-26)
This “power trait” section is critical to this body of research. As Rocco and West (1998) point out, the whole idea of privilege (power) is really very foreign to some White people. Thus, until the idea or concept is brought to their attention, it really is a non-issue. The danger in adult education is in some of our education classes those students who come from those groups on the margin will be silenced, thus their perspectives may not be heard, even in those discussions that involve issues of race.

In teacher education this issue presents itself in a totally different light. Because some White students in teacher preparation courses may have limited access to minorities or may have fewer opportunities to form authentic relationships with members of a minority culture, they may lean more heavily towards what Rocco and West (1998) describe as universality. Plainly stated, the universe and all that is in it revolves around my experiences and me. The danger in having such a worldview is that when you encounter others who don’t fit into your worldview or who don’t act as you think they should act, their behaviors or attitudes might be misconstrued by you as misbehaviors or bad attitudes. What this could mean for the minority student in the White teacher’s classroom is the strong potential for
misunderstandings and mistrust both on the part of student and teacher. This research study sought to help inform a discussion that could have far-reaching implications: Are there experiences for the White preservice teacher at the university level that affects their sense of self-efficacy as it relates to issues of cultural awareness and diversity?

Whiteness

Although the whole issue of Whiteness, as social construct will not be explicitly discussed, the issue did have a bearing on this research. The young ladies who were engaged in this study, although White represented so much more than “just” White preservice teachers. Adrienne Davis (1997) helps explain the complexity of the issue:

“I emphasize the void around Whiteness to illustrate the embeddedness of polarizing logic in the American racial paradigm. Other racial groups form their identity around shared cultural norms, common histories of immigration, mythologized homelands, or racial oppression. Non-Hispanic White American identity appears to be formed solely around the experience of not being Black, Asian or Latino/a. White Americans do not appear to have a sense of racial identity that is not linked to ethnicity or class unless juxtaposing
themselves against Blacks, Asian Americans, or sometimes Latinos/as” (p. 231). So where African Americans and other racial groups may be able to have a shared sense of cultural self, Whites may not be able to establish such a sense of who they are culturally.

I readily acknowledge that the young White preservice teachers from Deep South College represent more than “just” White teachers, they bring a varied assortment of self to the adult education classroom and subsequently to the elementary school classroom. It will be their self-acknowledgement of who they are culturally, economically, religiously, and educationally that helps inform this research study, as well as their own future teaching.

The purpose of this chapter was to examine relevant literature, develop the theoretical context that informs this study, and define the boundaries for exploring how White preservice teachers learn to become more culturally aware.

The literature that was presented addressed the history, development and focus of diversity and multicultural education in our country. This literature describes the complexity and volatility of the whole issue of diversity and multicultural education, especially in the areas of adult and public school
education. In the next chapter the researcher will present the methodology that was utilized to conduct this research study.
A society struggles to fulfill its best instincts, even as an individual does, and generally makes just as hard going of it. The fight against prejudice is an inevitable process. Man has been warring against his own lower nature ever since he found out he had one, and the battle against intolerance is part of the same old struggle between good and evil that has preoccupied us ever since we gave up swinging from trees—Margaret Halsey, 1946 (Mazel, 1998, p. 11).

The purpose of this chapter is to present the study design. This research study was conducted in a preservice teacher Race and Ethnic Relations class located at Deep South College, a small, 4-year, private liberal arts college in the deep southeastern United States.

**Study Design**

Case study methodology provided an opportunity for me to rigorously examine White preservice teachers who were enrolled in a mandatory Race and Ethnic Relations class (SOC 335). I purposefully pre-selected this group of White female preservice teachers because as Patton (2002) notes, “...the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 269). I selected the students in this class due to my
intrinsic interest in the teacher preparation program at Deep South College—a small, 4-year, private, liberal arts college.

**The Value of Qualitative Research for This Study**

Patton (2002) notes that naturalistic inquiry assumes the ever-changing world posited by the observation in the ancient Chinese proverb that “one never steps in the same river twice” (p. 54). Simply stated, change happens. Change is a natural, expected, and inevitable part of human experience, and documenting change is a natural, expected, and intrinsic part of fieldwork (Patton, 2002). The role of the researcher is to refrain from attempting to direct, encourage, or manipulate this change, but to document and go with the flow of the change. As a result, reading a good qualitative case study gives the sense of reading a good story. It has a beginning, middle, and an ending—though not necessarily an end (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research methods that seek to construe meaning of Whiteness as it relates to White teachers have been suggested by McIntyre (1997). She presents a fascinating “insider look” at the “white talk” of her own teacher-education students (foreword, xi). In all-white environments, White people articulate notions about race that we often sense
are adverse to the perspectives of people of color, even as we try to construe meaning of race in constructive ways (McIntyre, 1997). Although at least one class in diversity, multicultural education, and diversity training have become the staple of many preservice teacher programs, the questions still remain, “Through what experiences can White preservice teachers express feelings of becoming more culturally aware? And if they feel they have become more culturally aware, then how do these White preservice teachers go about applying this knowledge within classroom interactions with students?” The naturalistic inquiry of qualitative research does not seek to “fix” the White preservice teacher. Instead the focus of research is to listen and highlight the voices of the preservice teachers and their constructed meanings of diversity and culture. Because I was interested in what the preservice teachers had to say about how they viewed and understood their cultural selves, qualitative inquiry was most appropriate and valuable for this study.

I had an intrinsic interest in these students and their perceived readiness to teach and meet the needs of an increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse student population. My intention was to maximize what I could learn about how White female students learn to become more aware of
the academic, social, and emotional needs of the various cultural minorities represented in their classrooms and how they are able to express this sense of cultural awareness. This was significant because the teachers being prepared to teach in the new millennium receive very different training than that experienced by most teachers now working in schools. At issue is the idea of teacher efficacy and readiness as it relates to teaching and reaching children from cultural backgrounds that are different from theirs. Dilworth (1998) writes that though teacher efficacy has been investigated from a general perspective, no study could be located focusing on teacher efficacy as it relates to an underrepresented group. “What teachers believe about their abilities to teach children of color may be a critical aspect of teacher training” (Dilworth, 1998, p. 41). Stereotypical notions about specific ethnic groups exist in the minds of many teachers (Pang & Sablan, 1988). To the best of my knowledge, the Race and Ethnic Relations class I explored was in some ways unique to higher education within the state of North Carolina. I know of no other class that offers all the elements of readings, discussions, and real life interactions that this class did. Educators and educational policy makers throughout the state have acknowledged a need for more classes such as the one
being taught at Deep South College (Banks, et al., 2001). As a part of a three-prong approach, Deep South College has tried to raise awareness of global issues and diversity within the general education program. This three-prong approach addresses the following areas: within coursework, as part of fieldwork, and in other significant life experiences.

**Institutional Profile**

This study was conducted at Deep South College, a small educational church related, 4-year, private, liberal arts college in the deep southeastern United States. Deep South College was founded in 1891. The college was founded to educate women to excel and has a proud tradition of doing so for over 100 years. Deep South College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Master of Education, Master of Business Administration, Master of Music and Master of Science in Nutrition degrees. The present population of the college is approximately 2,600 students, of whom 25% are of nontraditional age. Deep South College educates women through a program of liberal and professional studies to excel in life beyond college. Upon graduation students are expected to begin
a life of responsible citizenship. Students are also prepared to leave as undergraduates with an awareness of the significance of diversity, a sensitivity to their place in a global world, and a disposition to deal with the complexities such an understanding engenders. The above statements are intended goals of Deep South University. Unfortunately the intended goals are not always the same as the realized goals. Deep South University is seeking to prepare its students for a global workplace, but it does acknowledge that there is still a lot of work to be done.

Teacher Preparation Program

Deep South College does not offer a major in education. Students complete a general studies curriculum, a major of their choosing, and professional courses to earn teacher licensure. Responsibility for the teacher preparation program rests with the Education Department whose members work in conjunction with departments designated as engaged in teacher preparation. Degree-seeking students who are completing teacher licensure are advised in the department of their major. Students in the Elementary Education (K-6) program undertake a core of licensure courses in the Education
Department and specialty licensure requirements, such as art and music, in the respective departments.

**Attention to diversity**

Attention to diversity and attendant issues has been given priority since 1995 at Deep South College. The concern of the College in this matter is expressed in the increased and ongoing planning of significant experiences to raise awareness of global issues and diversity within the revised general education program. Diversity is now addressed in the program in three areas: (a) within coursework, (b) as a part of fieldwork, and (c) in significant outside life experiences.

**Coursework:** A major focus of EDU 232 *Foundations of Education* is that of the role of teachers and schools in maintaining social inequalities and injustices. Foundations students read and respond to historical and contemporary texts, research the needs of local counties, and devise plans to bridge the achievement gap, all with a view to broaden their cultural perspective and understand differences. A significant training component on diversity is now part of SOC 335 *Teaching in the Elementary School*. The class offers a series of workshops on how to interact positively with students of color. Exploration of the issue of diversity as related to children’s literature is addressed in EDU 255
Let the Dialogue Begin

Literature in the Elementary School. This class explores the issues raised by the paucity of good children's literature for all ethnic groups and the obligations this imposes on the teacher of elementary-age children. An introduction to working with ESL students has been included in EDU 342, Preservice Practicum. This work will now be extended to a 1-hour course, EDU 445 Teaching ESL Students, which students will take just prior to the teaching internship. It was offered in for the first time in spring 2003.

Fieldwork: Teacher candidates in professional studies observe in schools with diverse populations. All teacher candidates are required to take SOC 335 Race and Ethnic Relations, a course designed to analyze the causes and consequences of racial and ethnic inequality in the United States. The focus of the class has moved beyond library research to include field experiences in communities that are different from those to which the student belongs. These experiences include attending religious services, art shows, music, dance, theatre, festivals, and pow-wows.

Outside experiences/seminars: Teaching Fellows, a select group of preservice teachers selected by the State, have a number of opportunities in addition to classwork to develop awareness of diversity and related issues. As juniors they are
required to attend a three-day conference seminar on cultural
diversity, and an ESL seminar. Teaching Fellows and Honors
students enrolled in either *Foundations of American Education*
or *Educational Psychology* complete 10 hours of tutoring or
mentoring with an at-risk youth.

**SOC 335: Race and Ethnic Relations**

The course syllabus was prepared by the instructor for
the Fall 2002 section of SOC 335. This class more
appropriately known as *Race and Ethnic Relations*, is intended
to provide opportunities for students to:

1. Learn the basic concepts of the study of racial/ethnic
relations (ethnicity, racism, race, caste, etc.)

2. Gain familiarity with some major approaches or
frameworks in the study of intergroup relations.

3. Gain an understanding of the evolution of economic and
political interests that have contributed to the changing
status of minority groups in America over time.

4. Learn empathy for the beliefs and lifestyle choices of
others.

It is during this course that I came in and led the
seminars, provided curriculum materials and led classroom
discussions for the diversity-training component. I was not
responsible for any student grading; the regular faculty
instructor was not present for any of the discussions or seminars. It was hoped that these circumstances would free preservice teachers to engage in seminar learning without fear of academic retribution. During this class the following activities took place:

Phase I: During this phase I explained the nature of the activities to the preservice teachers.

Phase II: All preservice teachers participated in a four-week, four-part diversity awareness-training module that I facilitated.

Phase III: All preservice teachers in SOC 335 were given the opportunity to participate in the Charity Elementary School field experience. I have facilitated these diversity-training modules at Deep South University for the past 4 years. In each of the 4 years, nearly 95% of the preservice teachers volunteered to participate in the Charity Elementary field experience.

The four-week diversity awareness modules consisted of the following sessions: (a) the first session involved basic introduction and overview of diversity. It was during this 2-hour session that my wife and I introduced the preservice teachers to cultural diversity; (b) in the second session the preservice teachers viewed the video *Auschwitz: If You Cried,*
You Died. This video illustrated how the prejudice, intolerance, and violence that characterized the Holocaust provide timely lessons for us today; (c) in the third session preservice teachers engaged in dialogue that centered on race and ethnicity as it relates to public school students and the academic achievement gap. Also discussed were common perceptions and stereotypes that majority groups hold about Blacks; (d) in this final session, preservice teachers were given an opportunity to bring closure to our 4-week sessions. It was also during this session that the preservice teachers were first given a formal introduction to Charity Elementary via promotional videotape. Charity Elementary School was the site of the preservice teacher field experience.

The field experience consisted of four visits to the school. Each visit was scheduled for 1 hour. Prior to their first visit preservice teachers were asked to start a journal. In their journal the first entry addressed their concerns, apprehensions, fears, hopes, and expectations as they prepared to start the field experience. During their visits the preservice teachers had various levels of engagement with the students of Charity Elementary, culminating in the teaching of a small group activity.
Charity Elementary School

Charity Elementary School is the site where the study participants engaged in a field experience. Based on a public relations and recruitment brochure dated 2002, Charity Elementary School is housed in an old public school building that was built in 1928, Charity is an elementary charter school located in the inner city. This is the first year Charity has had charter status. Charity Elementary is in its fifth year of operation. Prior to the current school year, Charity was a private Christian school. It currently serves 80 students in grades K-5. During school year 2003-2004 it will serve approximately 100 students in grades K-5. All of the students are African American. Ninety percent of the students receive either free or reduced lunch. Sixty-five percent of the students currently live or have lived in public housing.

Selection of Study Participants

Identification of units of analysis is affected by the racial composition of the participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Participants in this case study were preservice teachers enrolled in SOC 335, Race and Ethnic Relations. The class consisted of 20 White, female elementary education licensure candidates and their faculty instructor.
Preservice Teachers

“Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 227). Using methods of qualitative inquiry my intention was to comprehensively examine any shift in knowledge, attitude, or behavior as perceived by the White preservice teachers as it relates to how they view race and ethnicity in the elementary school classroom. Patton states, “Human relations specialists tell us that we can never fully understand the experience of another person” (p. 227), which raises the issue of breadth and depth. In this narrowly focused study I chose to study several different social interactions of the White preservice teacher.

Although 20 students were enrolled in SOC 335, ten of the students chose not to participate in the Charity Elementary field experience. The 10 who chose not to participate cited issues of lack of time and interest. Even after I offered further details and explanations of the study they still declined to participate.
Charity Elementary School Teachers

Also included in this study were the six teachers of Charity Elementary School, which consisted of five African American females and one White female.

Procedures for Informing Participants

University students who are enrolled in SOC 335, their professor, and the teachers of Charity Elementary School were all informed of this study and the purpose. I discussed the study and confidentiality commitments with participants, guaranteeing their anonymity and formalizing our agreement with a signed consent form (Appendix A and Appendix B) that explained the study, purpose, their participation, use of findings, and confidentiality. Participants were informed that I would keep all of the study data in my home office, locked and safely stored. Participants’ names were changed to ensure anonymity. During our discussion, I noted the value of their participation and that their contribution would be acknowledged through their experiences that would help guide the program development for future generations of preservice teachers.
Data Collection

In this particular research study I used four sources for data collection: field notes and observations, preservice teacher journal entries, audio recording of the preservice teacher interviews, and interviews with Charity Elementary School teachers.

Field Notes and Observations

According to Patton (2002) field notes contain the description of what has been observed; they should contain everything that the observer believes to be worth noting. “First and foremost, field notes are descriptive” (Patton, 2002, p. 303). My field notes came from my observation of preservice teachers as they participated in the in-class diversity training. I recorded field notes following each classroom diversity-training session. I described in great detail the physical settings, group interactions, conversations, and reactions during the in-class diversity sessions. In my field notes I also recorded my own personal thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the various comments and exchanges during the diversity sessions. I also recorded my thoughts and reactions to the preservice teacher interviews that I conducted after the preservice teachers had their field
experience at Charity Elementary School. Patton (2002) states that part of the purpose of being in a setting and getting close to the people in the setting is to permit one to experience what it is like to be in that setting. My field notes also included my insights, interpretations, beginning analysis, and working hypotheses about what was happening in the setting and what it might mean.

Preservice Teacher Journals

Deep South College students who participated in this study were also asked to keep a journal. Their first journal entry was to be written before they entered the Charity Elementary School campus. They recorded their expectations, fears, and thoughts about what they expected to encounter during their field experience. After each visit to Charity elementary the Deep South students were to write about their experience. They were to include any personal observations, revelations, or “ah-ha” moments they may have had during their scheduled time at the school. These journal entries were typed by each of the Deep South students and then emailed to my personal email account.
Preservice Teacher Interviews

In this study, interviews provided the instrument through which the preservice teachers were able to tell their stories. Before I began interviewing the preservice teachers I also began to tentatively make some assumptions about what I would hear based on the questions that would be asked. Part of this approach is based on what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term “prior formulations” (p. 302).

All interviews were scheduled for 1 hour, tape-recorded, transcribed by a professional transcriber, and provided to students for review. I explained the procedures to the students and informed them that they could end the interview at any time or refuse to answer particular questions. All interviews were completed without any complications.

I interviewed students at the end of the study, soon after they had completed their Charity Elementary field experience. The interviews were conducted individually in the campus reading room located about 100 yards from Duncan Hall (the education building). This particular space provided a central and recognizable location for the students. When I was initially trying to schedule the interviews, I gave students the option of selecting various locations around campus for the interview. Possible locations included the campus reading
room, campus library, a classroom in Duncan Hall, and a quiet room in Student Union. All students declined these various options and noted that the campus reading room was the best place for the interviews. I constructed an interview guide (Appendix C) based on my prior experience in conducting these types of presentations to similar student groups and after reviewing the literature. This guide provided a framework within which I developed questions, sequenced those questions, and made decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth (Patton, 2002). The interview guide presented questions that were tentative. New questions were not only possible, but also emerged as data collection progressed. The interview questions were open-ended, to promote a more descriptive response.

Through the interview the White preservice teacher was able to give voice to how she views her cultural self. She was also able to describe in her own voice any shift in knowledge, attitude, or behavior as it relates to the issue of race and cultural diversity. It was through her voice the research questions posed earlier in this document were explored. This, however, was not a one-way street; the interviewer and respondent jointly constructed the discourse of the interview. Again, the purpose of this study was to truly listen to what
was being said by these prospective teachers. These White teachers gave their own account of how it felt to be a minority of sorts. Through the interview process they were encouraged to express their hopes, fears, desires, limitations, and expectations as they worked with the children of Charity Elementary.

At the conclusion of my Charity Elementary field experience, I interviewed the preservice teachers, utilizing a wide range of questions that sought to give voice to the preservice teachers. Included in the questions were discussions about the four diversity sessions that I led, feelings about interacting with children from different cultural groups, descriptions of self (culturally, religiously, etc.).

Interviews With Charity Elementary Teachers

At the end of the Deep South College student field experience at Charity Elementary School, I entered into purposeful conversations with the classroom teachers at Charity Elementary School. Spradley (1979) argued for collecting data through “many casual, friendly conversations” (p. 58). The conversations between the teachers and me focused on the interactions the college students had during their
field experience at Charity Elementary School. My role was to simply listen to these teachers as they articulated what they saw happening during the interactions between the Charity Elementary School students and the Deep South College students. These conversations were documented in the form of an interview “write-up.” At the end of our conversations, I asked the Charity teachers to summarize our conversations in writing. I referred back to these write-ups during my data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning (Hatch, 2002). Hatch goes on to say that, “It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others” (p. 148). My data analysis and interpretation is presented as study findings in Chapter 4 and interpretations of the findings in Chapter 5. In Chapter 4 I report the emerging patterns and categories from the students in their voices. In Chapter 5, I offer my interpretations of the data by comparing study findings with the current literature and exploring new discoveries that extend the knowledge of White preservice teacher cultural awareness.
To aid in my analysis of data in this research, I used what Patton (2002) calls data triangulation. Data triangulation involves the use of a variety of data sources in a study. Patton goes on to state that a rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question. As I analyzed my study data, I looked for interrelated concepts using data collection techniques (i.e. coding, fieldnotes, and constant comparisons) to offer explanations (Charmaz, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was a continual process in which I inductively developed constructs that considered the diversity within the data through constant comparisons. Glaser and Strauss (1967) agree, “by comparing incidents, the analyst learns to see his (her) categories in terms of both their internal development and their changing relations to other categories” (p. 114).

Through the constant comparative method I analyzed and interpreted data throughout the study, which provided me with a way to have an ongoing conversation with the data that looped back into the study to guide my inquiry, classroom observation/participation, and interpretation. Stake (1995) regarded this as “vigorou...
its meaning. In the following subsections I will address data analysis and interpretation through: (a) emerging categories, patterns and themes; (b) data consolidation and saturation; (c) alternative explanations; and (d) peer debriefing.

Emerging Categories, Patterns, and Themes

As I entered the field and began to not only present the diversity awareness sessions to the preservice teachers but collect data as well, I also began the analysis process. I kept a personal journal during the duration of the research. At the end of each of the four classroom diversity sessions with the preservice teachers I would document my feelings, thoughts, reactions, and revelations as they pertained to each session. At the end of each daily interview session I did the same. Initially, I coded incidences from the data into categories, which I continued to redefine or enhance as data emerged (Charmaz, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The literature suggested possible coding classes as tentative codes for this study: (a) White privilege, (b) White racial identity, (c) teacher efficacy, (d) White talk, (e) racism, and (f) Them. New codes were not only possible, but also emerged from the data collected as the study progressed. As incidences were coded, I compared them with previous
incidences among categories. For example, the “Them” section emerged as I interviewed the preservice teachers and began to hear them verbally separate their White selves from others (Blacks). The preservice teachers saw themselves and their whiteness in some cases as a blessing (White privilege) and in other cases a curse (White racism). The process of coding and maintaining the integrity of emerging categories involved reading and rereading field notes in order to become familiar with the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

I engaged in memo writing throughout data collection and analysis. Hatch (2002) notes, “Memos may be written as possible explanations for behavior recorded in the data” (p. 183). I coded and analyzed data throughout the diversity presentations, which offered further guidance and focus to collecting data during the study. My process of continuous reading, thinking, coding, and contemplating data, though tentative, supported emerging categories. I used the etic approach and emic approach to data analysis. These two terms, coined by ethnosemanticist Kenneth Pike in 1954, were used to distinguish classification systems reported by anthropologists based on (a) the language and categories used by the people in the culture studied, an emic approach, in contrast to (b) categories created by anthropologists based on their analysis
of important cultural distinctions, an etic approach (Patton, 2002). As a participant observer during the diversity awareness sessions, I was able to intimately share in the life and activities of the setting under study in order to develop an insider’s view of what was happening. It was during this period of time that I developed indigenous typologies, the emic perspective, derived from the language of the participants. In conjunction with the emic perspective was the etic, consisting of analyst-constructed typologies that I developed as explanations of constructs (Patton, 2002).

Data Consolidation and Saturation

I compared categories with one another to see the ways in which accumulated knowledge was related and could become integrated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As categories were integrated, I tried to make sense of each comparison (p. 109). As the preservice teachers told their stories, patterns began to emerge that support the literature as it relates to White privilege, White teacher efficacy, and White talk. Patterns also began to emerge as the preservice teachers discussed family members and their attitudes toward issues of race, diversity, and even interracial dating. Toward the end of the study, data did not contribute new aspects of the study, but
did provide additional support to the existing categories. At this point I knew data saturation had been reached.

Alternative Explanations

I searched for alternative explanations that described how White preservice teachers expressed feelings of becoming more culturally aware and how they went about applying this knowledge within classroom interactions with students. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) “alternative explanations always exist” (p. 157). Patton (2002) asserts, “Being able to report that you engaged in a systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations enhances credibility” (p. 553). An alternative explanation to White teacher efficacy in cultural diversity issues is worth considering. It is possible that some of the changes I perceived in students’ improved diversity efficacy could be the result of natural developmental processes rather than their participation in diversity presentations. Young adults may experience general feelings of improved cultural self-efficacy when they leave their homes and parents and begin the process of becoming more independent thinkers.

Another way to look for a rival explanation is for the researcher to provide the opportunity to not find what is
expected. I did find, as expected, that many of these White preservice teachers had grown up in very segregated neighborhoods, religious communities, friendship circles, and dating situations much like those described in the literature. Thus many of their ideas, notions, and perceptions of persons from a minority cultural background showed a lack of cultural awareness. Finding these types of deficits, however, was not my primary focus. More than anything else, I wanted to give voice to this group of young White preservice teachers. The point that I wanted to make was that young White preservice teachers have things to say about their university training and teacher preparation to reach diverse cultural groups. These preservice teachers should be allowed to have their say. Although I expected to find young ladies struggling to make sense of complex issues of race and cultural diversity, especially as they impact their personal learning environments and the environments of their future students, I did not expect to find what emerged. What emerged and really surprised me was the optimism and hope, as it relates to issues of cultural diversity, which was voiced by these White preservice teachers.

The interview questions provided opportunity for the White preservice teacher to talk about a range of positive—and
negative-aspects of race and cultural diversity and the impact on their lives and learning. The questions were broad, open-ended, and offered ample opportunity for the preservice teachers to express themselves. I did not force the preservice teachers to talk and did not pressure them in any way to participate in the study or respond to questions in any particular ways. The students in this study could have chosen not to participate or not to answer questions. Being aware of the potential sensitivity surrounding conversations centered around race, education, and cultural diversity, I was prepared to protect students from intrusion into personal feelings and keep them out of public scrutiny. They grasped the opportunity to give voice to their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. They could have chosen to remain silent, but when given the opportunity they chose to speak for themselves in their own voices. A number of examples are provided in Chapter 4.

To protect the integrity of their voices, preservice teachers were also given the opportunity for member checking. All preservice teachers were given the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and to make any corrections or points of clarification. I also collaborated with a peer reviewer who read the field-notes. This second reader provided a different perspective and would not likely read the data as
I would. We were not looking for the same things, but agreed upon the categories that emerged from the data.

**Peer Debriefing**

Dr. David C. Forbes was the external auditor (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) (Appendix D). As a recent doctoral student, former college lecturer, former civil rights activist, and current pastor of Christian Faith Baptist Church, not only was Reverend Forbes knowledgeable of qualitative methodology, but issues of diversity and multicultural education as well. It is noteworthy that Dr. Forbes’ undergraduate major was elementary education and that he served for a number of years as an elementary school teacher. I believe that Reverend Forbes gave a fair and impartial review of the data.

As the auditor for my study, Reverend Forbes served several purposes, but primarily to ensure that I investigated aspects of the data that might otherwise remain unexplored. Reverend Forbes’ job was to question my analysis and interpretation of the data and to make sure that I understood my posture and thinking processes. During our meetings, Reverend Forbes questioned my working hypotheses and provided me with an opportunity to explore my thoughts and emotions so
that I was clearly focused and had the ability to make sound judgments.

Reverend Forbes and I met twice during my study, once after the diversity presentations had all been completed and then again at the conclusion of the study. During the first meeting Reverend Forbes and I discussed the data I had collected to that point. He reviewed copies of the field notes that I had been recording following the diversity presentations. Reverend Forbes agreed with the patterns that were emerging from the data and made some suggestions for me to contemplate and explore during the rest of the study. Primary to our discussions were the White preservice teachers’ reactions, responses, and interactions during the diversity presentations. Reverend Forbes specifically questioned presenter-preservice teacher interactions, how were the sessions received, what types of feedback was given by the preservice teachers.

Rev. Forbes and I met a second time at the conclusion of my study. It was at this time my auditor read my journal entries. He offered his own insights and observations based on my journal entries.
Role of the Researcher

As a regular unpaid guest lecturer on cultural diversity at Deep South College, I was also the presenter of the cultural diversity presentations to the group of White preservice teachers enrolled in SOC 335. In addition I am the former principal of Charity Elementary School, the site of the preservice teacher field experience. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) might argue that my presence as the researcher would constitute insider research, which in many research circles is not fondly viewed. One concern they present is that as the researcher, I would know the setting too well and would not be able to distance myself from a commonsense understanding of this setting. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), the very nature of qualitative research lends itself to such dilemmas. They state, “In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument: her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental to the paradigm (p. 79).” They go on to say that, “Whether that presence is sustained and intensive, as in long-term interview studies, or whether relatively brief but personal, as in in-depth ethnographies, the researcher enters into the lives of the participants” (p. 79). This entry into the lives of the
participants becomes an important part of the interplay between researcher and setting.

As the researcher and facilitator of diversity awareness sessions, I knew that my participation as a researcher in this study would have an impact on the study. However, Hatch (2002) argues that the level of involvement does not have to be either nonparticipation or complete participation (p. 73). I was constantly mindful of my presence in the diversity awareness sessions. I knew that due to the nature of what we were discussing, issues of race and diversity, that it would take some time for me to become accepted as a part of the group, a fellow traveler if you will. Thus I presented all four of the diversity sessions to the preservice teachers either alone or with my wife, who is White and an experienced teacher.

I talked with the professor of the class before I began my presentations. She explained that this group of women had no problem in participating in an experience such as the one I proposed. She went on to say that most of the women in her class had never participated in any study of any type, so there may be some initial nervousness on the part of the students. We also agreed that the university professor would not be present for any of the in-class sessions. The first
awareness session that I did with my wife started out with the Deep South students being very quiet. As the session progressed, the interaction and dialogue became livelier and more intimate. This has been the case when I have done these types of sessions in the past. Over time, and these sessions proved to be no exception, everyone (myself included) appeared to become more comfortable with the subject matter and the discussions as we did more of the sessions. It was through my active participation in the diversity sessions, that I was able to build trust, which enhanced the scope of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Another concern was that the study participants would view me as an employee/former employee situated within an organizational culture and structure with relative interests and opinions instead of as a researcher with no ties to the schools (Deep South College and Charity Elementary School) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Patton (2002) argues “a participant observer shares as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the setting under study in order to develop an insider’s view of what is happening…” (p. 268). My experience in the Del Ray Public School System as a system-wide diversity trainer for the past 10 years, combined with my participation as a facilitator over the past 3 years in the Teaching Fellows
Junior Conference and my role as guest diversity awareness presenter at Deep South College for the past 3 years, lends to my expertise and vested interest in educating preservice teachers and educators about issues of diversity and their impact on students and student achievement. Because I have been a part of the Deep South College community, I have the advantage of knowing the culture of the school, how much emphasis is placed within the education program on preparing preservice teachers to teach diverse student populations, and the extent of these efforts on the part of various staff members in the education department. I also serve on the Deep South College Teacher Education Committee and the college’s Teaching Fellows Committee. I am accepted by the College as a respected scholar and a contributor to the school’s extended influence. This study was a very natural outgrowth of the teacher education program and my interest and involvement in various facets of the teacher education program.

A final concern could focus upon issues of power and authority I had as presenter for the diversity sessions. I am also the former principal of the school at which the preservice teachers would be doing their field experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Students were informed that I would in no way have any input in their final grade for the class. I
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clearly communicated to the students my role as a researcher and co-traveler on a quest for knowledge. I acknowledge that my role as presenter and assistant principal had an effect on the participants. My responsibility was to explain my roles so that the participants were informed of my intention to constantly monitor my actions and interactions with students, faculty teacher, and Charity Elementary teachers, and to be cognizant of how my roles may have affected the study. One of the ways I was able to monitor my actions, thoughts, feelings, and intentions was through a journal that I kept, beginning with the first diversity training session.

Researcher Autobiography

I grew up in a small, rural community in the southeast during the early 1960s and 1970s. The county in which I lived was outside a medium sized city. In 1967 I went to school for the first time. My first year of school was not a good one. It was so bad my first grade teacher wrote on my year-end report card- promoted “on trial”. That meant I would be put back into first grade if I could not keep up with my peers and with the work. It was during my trial period I realized that the public schools could deal you a rough hand if you came into some teachers’ classrooms with certain types of baggage.
There were several teachers both White and Black who helped to shape my view of self. I remember Mr. Dobbins a Black male who was my junior high school track coach. It was he who helped me to discover my ability to run track. It was he who contacted a former runner from a nearby university and early on planted the seeds that led to my gaining a track and field scholarship to that college. Then there was Mrs. Barker, my high school Spanish teacher, who along with her husband came to my house, picked me up and took me to my very first road race. These teachers were very instrumental in helping me to develop a strong sense of self and self-esteem.

Ethics

A study in which White preservice teachers participated in diversity awareness sessions and practical field experience that involved interacting with children from a racial background very different from their own, and then in their own words telling about the experience, has the potential to touch the lives of many people, including the preservice teachers themselves. For this reason, I made it very clear to the participants that I had chosen to explore the issue of preservice teacher preparation as it relates to cultural diversity because of the direct impact this issue is sure to
have not only on their professional careers as educators but possibly their personal lives as well. I wanted these preservice teachers to understand that it was out of a sense of duty and respect that I sought to understand their sense of Whiteness and how they were able to express feelings of cultural awareness.

Lisa Delpit (1995) said it best when she noted, “Knowledge about culture is but one tool that educators may make use of when devising solutions for a schools’ difficulty in educating diverse children” (p. 167). For many of these White females discussing issues of race and diversity and how it had affected their lives and shaped their attitudes towards cultural minorities could have been very uncomfortable. My respect for the lives and values of these young ladies was upheld and not compromised under any circumstances. I maintained my integrity as a person and a researcher and conducted this study according to the ethical principles of honesty, fairness, and respect for individuals.

I fully informed the participants of the study, answered any questions they had, and assured them that this study would not deceive them or cause them any harm. I told participants that although this study was in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree requirements, the purpose for doing this study
exceeded graduation requirements. I told the participants that I intended to share this study within academia and would also indicate the potential for this study to be published in some form. I discussed the study with all of the participants, guaranteed their anonymity, and formalized our agreement with a signed informed consent form (Appendix A and Appendix B), which also explained the study, purpose, their participation, use of findings, and confidentiality. During our discussion, I noted the value of their experiences as shared through their participation and contribution to the study, which would help guide the program development for future generations of White preservice teachers.

At the beginning of the study, I reminded participants of the process and reiterated my assurance of confidentiality. Before beginning the interviews, I noted the potential of emotionally difficult areas of discussion and reminded participants that they could end the interview and study participation at any time and could choose not to answer some questions. I also informed participants that they would be given a copy of their transcribed interviews to review for accuracy and to ensure that I recorded what they intended during the interview. As the interviewer, I was careful not to
invade the privacy of the study participants. I was respectful of their responses and privacy.

Criteria of Soundness

"All research must respond to canons of quality—criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). All social science research must answer to questions of trustworthiness. By asking questions concerning credibility, transferability and application, replication, and accuracy of research findings, participants helped assure that the study is grounded in real-world experience and is not merely a fabrication based upon my own biases or prejudices (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). There are some, such as postmodernists and feminists, who challenge traditional research and assert that all discovery and truths emerge from the researcher’s prejudgments and predilections. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “Those espousing such positions argue that such predispositions should be used as building blocks... for acquiring new knowledge” (p. 192). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to these questions as establishing the truth-value of the study, its applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Lincoln and Guba propose four constructs that reflect the assumptions of the qualitative
paradigm—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility, known conventionally as internal validity, was the extent to which I found what I think I found. The strength of a qualitative study such as this, one that aims to describe a setting, process, social group or pattern of interaction will rest with its validity (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Marshall and Rossman (1999) go on to state “An in-depth description showing the complexities of processes and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid” (p. 193). The question that is asked when all is said and done, is did I observe and find what I thought I would be observing and finding? To answer that, I relied upon the time and effort I spent during the classroom diversity presentations, my data sources, and the various avenues utilized for data review. In addition, Dr. David C. Forbes, my external auditor, was instrumental in helping to establish credibility. Dr. Forbes’ job was to question my analysis and interpretation of the data and to make sure I understood my own perspectives and thinking processes.
Transferability

The second construct Lincoln and Guba propose is transferability, in which the researcher must argue that his findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice. In this instance, the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher. Marshall and Rossman (1999) refer to this as the second decision span in generalizing. That is, the first decision span allows the researcher to generalize findings about a particular sample to the population from which the sample was drawn. The second decision span occurs when another researcher wants to apply the findings about the population of interest to a second population believed or presumed to be sufficiently similar to the first to warrant that application. As researcher in this study, it was my responsibility to provide rich description of the setting and participants, so that another researcher could contemplate its transferability.

I described the setting and participants of this study in order to provide a framework of differing historical conditions and emerging patterns (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I caution that cross-group comparisons might not be
appropriate due to the individuality of participants, situations, and conditions. Yes, White preservice teachers are prevalent throughout the United States; however, university and college preparation programs in the area of diversity and cultural awareness vary greatly from school to school. In addition, the cultural diversity presentations that were used during this study were designed and developed totally by me, with some material being developed from personal experiences.

**Dependability**

The third construct is dependability, in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by and increasingly refined understanding of the setting (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The goal of this study was to describe and explain in rich detail the patterns that contribute to the development of cultural awareness in White preservice teachers. The intention was not to produce standardized sets of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issue would have produced. Rather it was to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with a detailed study of that situation.
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(Schofield, 1990). More consistent with this study was the idea of a discourse that reflects many voices and reconceptualizes the language of generalizability. Schofield notes that there appears to be emerging consensus among qualitative researchers to reject generalizability as a way to produce laws that are universally standard, while maintaining that studies in one situation can be used to talk about or form a judgment about other situations, and relying on thick descriptions.

In qualitative research, one of the ways to try and ensure that data are comparable is to address various research issues. Lee J. Cronbach and Associates (1980) have concluded that social phenomena are too variable and context bound to permit very significant empirical generalizations. Thus, instead of trying to offer a way to replicate this study, I directed my attention to recognizing and descriptively addressing what LeCompte and Preissle (1993) define as five critical problems. The first area of concern was that of my status within the study group. One of the first things I did was to clearly identify my role and status within the study group. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993), “Any conclusions reached by ethnographers are qualified by the social roles investigator’s hold within the research site” (p.
334). They go on to say, “Other researchers will fail to obtain comparable findings unless they develop corresponding social positions or have research partners who can do so” (p. 334).

The second area to be addressed was my choice of informants. “Closely related to the role the researcher play is the problem of identifying the informants who provide the data” (p. 335). This is true because each individual informant has access to unique and idiosyncratic information. I provided descriptions of all informants of the study, one that identifies their individual characteristics in order to delineate the kinds of participants who served as informants and how they were selected. The next area that received attention was descriptions of social situations and conditions. “Delineation of the physical, social, and interpersonal contexts within which data are gathered permits comparative ethnographies” (p. 335). As a way to address this potential problem area, I described the social context and conditions in which data were collected. The fourth area to be addressed was analytic constructs and premises. I acknowledged the constructs, definitions, and units of analysis informing this research. I explicitly presented my analytic constructs and the assumptions that guide my use of language and methods
of analysis. The fifth and final area to receive my attention was a full description of methods of data collection and analysis. I clearly articulated data collection processes, how data were recorded, stored, analyzed, checked, and triangulated. My peer auditor, to check for study and data dependability, reviewed this process and the outcomes.

Confirmability

The final construct discussed by Marshall and Rossman (1999) is confirmability. Confirmability seeks to capture the traditional concept of objectivity. The central question that is asked is whether the findings of this study could be confirmed by another researcher. This idea of neutrality is the focus of objectivity in a conventional research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Schofield (1990) argues that it would not be expected for other researchers to independently determine precisely the same conceptualization; rather, it is more important that “other researchers’ conclusions are not inconsistent with the original account” (p. 203). It would not be unusual for differences to be reported; they would not however, negate the data. To establish confirmability of my study, I contracted a reader who reviewed my data to examine the extent to which the patterns I claimed were evident. I
tape-recorded the preservice teacher interviews, which preserved the original data. I coded and recoded data according to my theoretical framework, which I have established to inform the study.

Summary

The process of understanding how White preservice teachers make sense of the issues of diversity, discrimination, White privilege, and racism is critical to investigating how they learn to prepare themselves to deal with culturally diverse student groups. This study focused on deepening our understanding of the opportunities and challenges that face White preservice teachers as they seek to prepare themselves to face an increasingly culturally diverse student population. If these prospective teachers are at the very least aware of any potential cultural biases they may bring to the classroom, they may be open to experiences that could possibly help to reduce or eliminate any biases that might hinder the development of their students’ total wellness, including but not limited to their social, emotional, and academic wellness. While it was my intention to fairly preserve the voice and reality that White preservice teachers presented through this study, I also know that it is
now through my interpretations of their understanding of “diversity” and awareness that this study will be represented.

In the next chapter I will discuss findings of this study. This discussion will be focused on the dialogue of the White preservice teacher.
I suppose it was naïve of me to think ... that if one only searched one’s heart one would know that none of us is responsible for the complexion of his (her) skin, and that we could not change if we wished to, and many of us don’t wish to, and that this fact of nature offers no clue to the character or quality of the person underneath—Marian Anderson, 1956 (Mazel, 1998, p. 37).

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the social and educational experiences of White female preservice teachers. Certainly, based on the literature, (see Chapter 2), this is an area that could benefit from further research. In an effort to extend the current knowledge in this area, this research has allowed the intimate stories detailing the experiences and perceptions of White female preservice teachers who are well on their way to becoming classroom teachers to rise and serve as beacons for other White preservice teachers as they prepare to teach and reach children in what are becoming increasingly diverse public school classrooms.

Data for this research were collected during the spring of 2003 using a qualitative research design method (see Chapter 3). Interviews took place in either a reserved
classroom or the reserved reading room on the campus of Deep South College. Open-ended questions were utilized. I compiled field notes during the course of the interviews. The collected data were audiotaped and professionally transcribed. This compiled research data gave these White preservice teachers an opportunity to share, in their own words, the myriad of personal, social, and cultural experiences that have helped shape who they are. Further, the interviews provided an unencumbered means to anecdotally share their stories, in their own words, about the various ways they have experienced their White world based on their interpretation of what was reality for them.

Indeed, by giving the White preservice teachers opportunity to voice and reflect on their own cultural socialization they were able to speak and share their own perceptions of their personal experiences using vivid descriptions, stirring emotions, and strong supporting details. In this way the White preservice teacher had a unique, individual opportunity to share and express ideas, values, personal reflections, and possible misconceptions. This research provided the avenue for such an experience to occur for the interviewees in this study.
It is noteworthy that value is often assigned or derived from incidents or experiences based on an individual’s perception, and the value assigned by that individual may not reflect its true meaning or be reflective of everyone who is exposed to the same experience. There is an old adage that says, “Possession is nine-tenths of the law.” Others contend that perception is nine-tenths of reality. In other words, as the perceptions and experiences of White preservice teachers are explored, what they experienced as they were growing up, their social, religious, and educational experiences may not necessarily be reality for every White female preservice teacher. But what is important is that their perception of what is happening to them becomes the basis on which they construct their real world. Reality for them is what they perceived to be happening, and it manifests itself as what they believe is really happening to and around them. When it comes to race matters, perception surely informs.

In order to give voice and recognition to the cultural life experiences of these White preservice teachers through their oral expressions of their experiences and perceptions and to understand their experiences based on those perceptions, this study sought to answer the following questions:
1. What are some of the personal experiences that may lead a select group of White female preservice teachers to believe their sense of cultural awareness has been affected, either in a positive or negative sense?

2. What are some of the educational experiences that may lead White female preservice teachers to believe their sense of cultural awareness has been affected, either in a positive or negative sense?

3. How do White female preservice teachers express their sense of cultural awareness?

4. How have their personal or preservice educational experiences affected their perception of their readiness to meet the educational needs of culturally diverse students and their parents?

As the reader will soon discover, the experiences of White female preservice teachers in this study are varied and yet similar, as revealed in the following research results. On one hand, they are all linked by common threads that bind them together while on the other hand, they are separated by their unique exposures and experiences that are rarely contemplated or given a second glance by individuals having them. Further, their individual experiences have their own special twist that
makes it unique to the individual White female preservice teacher.

In this chapter, I present the experiences, realities, and perceptions of 10 White female preservice teachers and facilitate their very different stories as they take shape and freely form. In these various vignettes, a description is offered by each of the White women of their life experiences and its reality for her. They each share culturally relevant incidents that have impacted their educational, religious, social, and personal development. They also share distinguishable and memorable culturally relevant moments and express feelings of their perceived readiness to teach and positively impact the education of culturally different students. Direct quotations filled with expressive dialogue “are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents’ depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions” (Patton, 2002, p. 21).

The analysis of the research interviews is presented in categories which surfaced during the course of the interviews. Rich descriptions of each White female preservice teacher are provided, allowing the interviewees to take form, mentally
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materialize and literally rise from the pages as the reader
draws meaning from the research. All interviewees, college
campuses, elementary schools, and significant characters or
events have been disguised and assigned pseudonyms. These
fictitious names are presented throughout this research to
protect the identities and privacy of the interviewees.

Using the White Preservice Teacher Interview Guide (see
Appendix A) as a working outline, the interviewees were first
asked to paint a broad verbal picture of what their lives
looked like in their formative years, to help establish an
idea of cultural values, norms, and expectations. All of the
information shared by the White female preservice teachers is
presented using their own words and descriptions.

White Female Preservice Teacher—Kelsey

Growing Up White

Kelsey was the first scheduled interview. She came into
the room with an expectant look on her face. Kelsey, who grew
up in a small town about 40 minutes from the beach, attended
public schools throughout her school career. She explained
that her first experience with a private school came when she
first went to college, here at Deep South College.
Kelsey explained that as she grew up she had two types of friends, school friends and those friends that you “called” all the time. As she talked about friends and friendships she shared a particularly poignant story about one of her few Black friends, an athlete who ended up shooting his girlfriend. As she further expanded her memories she explained that her father was raised to be very prejudiced (a natural part of his upbringing). Kelsey went on to say that her mother, an elementary school teacher, was probably not prejudiced because of the fact that she was an educator.

It was also apparent to Kelsey that the area of town in which she grew up was quite different from that of most Blacks that she knew. In fact, Kelsey distinctly remembered there being a White side of town as well as a Black side of town. Kelsey lived in the “rich” White side of town. Most of the Blacks she knew lived in the poor or “project” side of town. It was this early segregation that helped shape the ideas, values, and perceptions that Kelsey had about diversity and cultural awareness.

Racial Identity

One of the first questions I asked Kelsey was how she would describe her racial identity. Interestingly enough she
had a rather difficult time answering this particular question. With a bit of nervous laughter she replied, “Okay, let’s see. We’re White.” Explaining that she had never been asked that question before, Kelsey had never really thought about having to describe her racial self. Kelsey went on to explain, “It has never been questioned. I’ve never had to… Nobody has ever presented it to me in a different way. It is just, you know… it is there. I had never had to think about my race."

Kelsey went on to talk about those people in her life who helped to shape her self-racial view. Within her immediate family most of her relatives had the same type backgrounds, married the same types of people, and had children that went to the same types of schools that they did. “Most of us, all of them are, the same class, similar. They live in similar neighborhoods. But with that being the case, it has kept things normal, because that would be what was seen all the time by me.” Other areas in Kelsey’s life echoed this exclusivity. While growing up as a Southern Baptist, Kelsey attended a church whose congregates were exclusively White. Kelsey recalled a Black couple coming to the church for a short period of time. They left because they did not feel comfortable there in an all-White congregation. This
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particular church was a very, very traditional, very
fundamentalist Southern Baptist Church. Breaking those racial
barriers was not accepted and not tolerated. Kelsey did
acknowledge that things are slowly changing. Several different
factors have come into play; the church has grown larger, many
of the older people have left the church. Still in the midst
of this new acceptance there are only two Black couples in the
church.

Knowledge of Black Culture

Kelsey readily admits that she knows little about Black
culture. “I’d say that it is... Well, see, I don’t know.” Kelsey
had a really difficult time articulating what she knew about
Black culture. In an effort to try to articulate what she felt
was limited knowledge, her comments centered on what she knew
about “Black” food. For Kelsey this was her most accurate way
to express her knowledge.

They have good food. They cook good home-cooked
food. I’ve had their food, and it is good. It is
good home-cooking food... It tastes a little bit
different than home-cooked White food. It is good
country food.
Kelsey also expressed a belief that Black culture could be defined as a family-oriented culture. She felt that Black people tended to stick together. Kelsey believes that Blacks have a sense of loyalty to and for each other, “When they need each other, they’re there. You know, that kind of thing. I’ve seen that through...I mean it shows itself through history. They’ve had to, and they still do. That’s how they are.”

Children of Charity Elementary School

As Kelsey looked back, in retrospect, during her stroll down memory lane, she described some of the experiences she had at Charity Elementary School. When asked if there was a specific “ah-ha” moment in terms of diversity or cultural awareness during her time with the children of Charity, Kelsey became silent for a moment before answering the question,

Not really, no. Not any specific one, other than I noticed that the kids were really starved for attention. I don’t know if this was because they were children or if this was because this was an African American thing and them being poor children. I don’t know what it was. Because I’ve been in other classrooms that were predominately White, where
equally the children were just…they grabbed on like leeches, and that’s how they were.

Kelsey went on to say that even though they had met her for the first time for an hour or so, the children of Charity Elementary were giving her hugs and goodbyes, and asking, “When will we see you again?” With somewhat of a smile, Kelsey said that she felt like somewhat of a celebrity in front of the children. This fact was something that stayed with Kelsey. Her newfound celebrity status was something that she definitely noticed, thought about and discussed with others. “Maybe somebody else who was visiting at the school brought it up, but I quickly noticed it.” Kelsey reasoned that for many of these children, attention is at a premium. She felt that most of the children came from single-parent homes and that parents, who are there for them most of the time, may still be working two or three jobs. Thus, the time for individual attention is not there. Kelsey saw this not as a racial thing or a class thing but more of a child thing.

When asked what she learned about herself while there at Charity Elementary, Kelsey responded, “I would say that I…it reinforced that I really enjoy being with children. They’re a lot easier to deal with than adults.” Kelsey really appreciated the honesty of the group of second graders she got
a chance to work with. She felt that second graders were still pliable, not as “mean” as the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth graders. In Kelsey’s mind the openness and pliability of this group of second graders made it possible for her to get to know them quickly and in a more personal way. “I felt like for anything else it would have taken a lot more time, a lot more visits to really learn a whole lot. Because even though it does only take a few experiences to learn things from children, there is so much, and even in a small classroom, there is a lot going on.”

When asked how she felt about being placed in a situation where she was now a minority, Kelsey had this to say,

When I was there I didn’t even think about it. I’ve always thought that adults, more so than children, recognize those kinds of things. I don’t think the kids would have cared if I were blue. But then that would have been abnormal, so they would have said, “Oh she’s blue. That’s neat.” That would have been it. They don’t care. So from them I didn’t get anything. It didn’t matter to the children. But I always feel like adults notice those things whether they need to or not.
Kelsey went on to talk further about the differences between how adults react to race and issues of difference versus children’s reactions. She felt that adults tend to focus more on differences, particularly racial differences, much more so than children. She felt that there was absolutely no perceived racial tension from the children at Charity Elementary School. To her pleasant surprise Kelsey found the teacher in the second grade classroom to be very welcoming, very sweet, and did not seem to care that this young, White, preservice teacher was visiting in her classroom. In Kelsey’s mind color was not an issue to the students or their teacher.

Preparation for Diversity

Kelsey was asked to think back to the teacher preparation classes that she had had at Deep South College and to describe the extent to which she felt prepared to deal with culturally or racially different children. Kelsey was quiet for a moment as she pondered this question; finally she stated that she had decided not to pursue her teaching license. She instead has decided to do a sociology degree instead. Kelsey shared, “I want to work with people—I don’t really—people that need my help.” She went on to elaborate, “The people that I will probably, unfortunately, work with will be many minorities,
children, and adults.” In Kelsey’s mind the education that she has been receiving at Deep South College has been somewhat biased.

Much of what we have learned here has been delivered from a very White perspective. However, if you went through the whole program, and you did get your license here, I would hope that the Education Department would try hard to prepare you for that [diversity].

Kelsey went on to say that she did have concerns about the lack of diversity at Deep South College. Since it is a predominantly White college with very few minorities and since the vast majority of professors at the college are White, then it is difficult to understand how the students can get a balanced cultural worldview. Said Kelsey, “I say I’m going to work with minorities, and I probably will if I do what I want, I can prepare myself the best I can, but I don’t depend on the teachers.”

Kelsey shared with me that this whole experience had been truly eye-opening for her. She was particularly appreciative of the diversity focus of the Race and Ethnic Relations class that she was enrolled in. She explained that the class “opened my eyes to a lot more things.”
Growing Up White

As Tara came into the interview room I made a very quick assessment. This was a very confident and together young woman. As we settled into the interview those suspicions were quickly confirmed. Tara was very easy to talk to and more than willing to engage in a dialogue about diversity and culture. Tara, who grew up in a small town in the eastern part of the state, described her town as pretty rural and her neighborhood as “more-or-less” segregated. “The only diversity in my neighborhood is my neighbors, who are Indian.” Tara described the friendships she cultivated while growing up as being a pretty varied mix. Since she was “really” into art while growing up, and not into sports, which were a lot of times very integrated, she did not have a tremendous amount of contact with those from outside her own cultural background. This applied to not only friendships at school but relationships at church as well.

Racial Identity

Tara was almost eagerly awaiting my question on how she would describe her own personal racial identity.
If someone asked me what I was—and I actually get asked this often, and it’s funny because people start naming things that they think I am. They think I’m Puerto Rican, or I’m Jewish or I’m—I’ve had Hispanic, Caribbean. But I have actually been looking into this more recently because so many people have asked me. So before, I would have probably just said, “Well, I am White.” But I have since learned, after being asked several times, that I have Irish in me.

Tara also shared with me the importance that extended family had played in the development of her cultural self. According to Tara her grandmother is very, very involved in their family history. This grandmother has written for each one of her children books chronicling the family history. These books will be passed on to the grandchildren. Said Tara, “I used to think, ‘Why are you putting this much time in it?’” As she ruminated on this point, Tara also shared that the fact that her grandmother placed so much emphasis on the family history has played a part, as she got older, in understanding the importance of family history and cultural pride.
Knowledge of Black Culture

Tara drew upon her background as an art/education major to discuss her knowledge of Black culture. Tara explained that she had studied the culture from an art standpoint, most recently in a research paper for her educational psychology class. In this particular paper Tara had researched learning differences between Mexican Americans, Blacks, and Whites. Tara was very eager to tell me what she had learned.

Blacks, through this research I learned, tend to like group learning. The most interesting thing that I found is that often they’re labeled “problem children,” or things like this, because they’ll help the other student and they [the classroom teacher] think they’re cheating and then they’re sent out of the room. But it’s actually part—they’re very group-oriented and people oriented, and things like that. That’s not what’s going on—where Anglos—and this is not—I don’t say I believe in it, this is what I learned from it—are more independent in learning. They want to do it on their own, and they were not as likely to help others.

Tara then went on to say that in spite of all the “research,” her personal approach, once she was in her own
classroom, would be to get to know her students on a personal level. Tara shared, “The only thing I know to do is to give them [her students] three or four things, try different things, see who’s successful, and ask them, ‘What do you need me to do for you?’”

Children of Charity Elementary School

Tara had no hesitation at all expressing her thoughts about the children of Charity. When she was asked if there were any diversity or racial “ah-ha” moments Tara very quickly answered with a resounding no. What initially struck her more than anything else was the laid back nature and atmosphere of the fourth grade class that she observed. She stated, “I did see that the classroom setup was very laid back, it was not ‘I’m your teacher, I’m going to teach this—you’re going to sit there all day long and not talk and not do anything.’” Tara thought for just another moment and went on to give further elaboration.

Common sense tells you that an 8 year old cannot sit there all day long and that an 8 year old is going to turn and talk to their friends. So, but you know—what I was shocked about was that I thought we were doing a study on diversity and the school itself was
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not diverse, so I think to myself, “What is this teaching children in general?” I don’t think anyone is better for race, for money, for whatever and I say that here in an all-girl school that’s private. I went on to ask Tara how she felt about being placed in a situation where for the most part she was the “only.” I thought there must be some reason. I’m sitting there thinking to myself, “Of course I have to have been put in this situation so that I feel like a minority.” But it didn’t occur to until probably a short time ago that I was. It just, I just see children that are in there, eager to learn and want somebody to teach them. I was horrified that they didn’t have art in the school and I actually was going back, after the study was over, to teach an art lesson. The only time that anything of a diversity nature happened was when they were reading this book, and one of the children asked about slavery, why it happened, or something, a pretty deep question. I could tell—and there were three or four teachers in at different times, so it’s not important who it was but was very reluctant to give an answer and I assumed that it might have been
because I was in the room. I thought, “This was part of history and I wasn’t there; I don’t agree with it.” This child is asking a question that he wants to know the answers to, and I could tell—it was difficult. I thought maybe it’s the age difference in the teacher and myself, that maybe the person was afraid that my feelings would be upset or that I would be offended. I thought, “Just answer the question, the facts are there, so just answer.”

Tara also shared her overall impression of how the children of Charity reacted to her presence in their classroom. She stated that they were very open to her being there. She did get the normal curiosity questions, “Who are you? What are you doing here? Can you help me, can you come over here?” Tara went on to say that she never once heard the words “Black,” “White,” or “African,” spoken about others while she was there. She was surprised, but in a very pleasant way. In Tara’s eyes she was accepted by these Black students who felt totally at ease with her and for the most part the feeling was mutual.
Preparation for Diversity

Tara was also asked to think back to the teacher preparation classes that she had had at Deep South College and to describe the extent to which she felt prepared to deal with culturally or racially different children. In Tara’s view her teacher education preparation has done a credible job when it comes to preparing teachers for diversity. Tara remarked,

I have been very fortunate in our education program. Dr. Staley, the Head of the Art Department, oversees our teaching experiences and we have taught BED [Behaviorally and Emotionally Disabled] classes, ESL [English as Second Language] classes, cross-categorical, the transitional housing where there are homeless children, and EMD [Educable Mentally Disabled]. We’ve taught all types of students that—ranging in mental functions to different races to “can’t speak English.”

Tara went on to talk about her perceived readiness to deal with the parents of her culturally different students. It is here that she expressed some possible fear and trepidation. Part of the reason for this perceived fear is the lack of preparation in the educational program. According to Tara dealing with culturally different parents is something that
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has not been taught as much. Interestingly enough that has been something that Tara has expressed an interest in to college professors. Tara explained, “I have had surveys, or interviews and things that I’ve done with teachers that I could pose my own questions and I have certainly asked that.” Tara feels this whole issue is never really about race but more about how to handle a parent. According to Tara the best way to handle parents, of whatever cultural background, is to invite the parent into the classroom.

The only thing I know to do is to have the parent come in. My first question is—my first statement is “I’m here to help, that’s why I do this. I’m here. What are your expectations of me? What are your expectations of your child and our relationship? What do you see?”

This approach, according to Tara, is the best way to deal with culturally different parents.

White Female Preservice Teacher—Jeri

Growing Up White

The next woman to be interviewed was Jeri. Unlike the others before her, Jeri was very quiet and demure. Her whole demeanor was one of quiet reserve. As we settled into the
interview I would quickly find that beneath this quiet exterior lay a very warm, engaging, and deeply philosophical young woman. Jeri was born in the western part of the state. However, she had lived in Turkey for a year, and before that, in Texas. Her family moved to the western part of the state when she was four. In this rural part of the state, she attended a high school that was almost 30 miles away. Because she lived so close to an Indian reservation, she went to school on the Cherokee Reservation for 4 or 5 years during her elementary school days. Because she lived in a part of the state that did not have a lot of diversity, the majority of diversity experienced by Jeri came from the Indian reservation students. Jeri could not recall having many if any friends who did not look like her.

I guess they were basically like me. That’s all there were really. There would be like—I’m trying to think of how many African Americans were in my classes. If there were, there would be like one in my class once a day or something.

Jeri went on to say that she did have a few friends who were Native American, but that’s about it. Elaborating, she shared that in high school she had one really good guy friend who was Black. Since she was not raised in a really strict
religious house her family did not attend church on a regular basis, so Jeri only had very faint memories of even going to church. She really could not remember if anyone who did not look like her went to her church.

**Racial Identity**

When asked how she would describe her racial self, Jeri very quickly and promptly replied, “I hate these questions.” She explained,

I had this in a paper once and I was like “this is an awful question” because I don’t feel a strong pull toward anything, any group. I don’t just say, “Oh well, I’m White, I’m the same as them, I have the same the beliefs,” because everyone is different. I believe in things that are different. So I have a really hard time narrowing it down to one group. I really don’t know how to say it, but I guess if I had to pick, I’d say White.

When pressed to explain what she meant by saying she was white Tara had a hard time trying to express her thoughts. She finally ended up stating, “I don’t even know, besides skin color.”
I went on to ask Jeri about those people in her life who she felt had helped her to shape her cultural self-view. In Jeri’s mind her mother was probably the most influential in this area of her life. Jeri shared that her mother was always really open and accepted everyone, regardless of skin color. Jeri, after a long pause, finally looked at me and said, “You know, I have never really had to think about a lot of what you have asked me.” She continued, “It’s kind of strange, but I probably would not have thought about these things if you had not asked them.” Jeri went on to explain.

When I first came here to Deep South College, I really did not know that racism was such a big issue still. I guess because I wasn’t exposed to it because I swear my friends in high school—maybe because they weren’t exposed to it so—we never talked about it really. I just assumed everything was fine. It wasn’t such a big issue, race relations, until I came here.

Knowledge of Black Culture

This is one area that Jeri had a hard time discussing. Jeri articulated her knowledge of Black culture based on her own self-professed limited knowledge.
From the little bit I know—I guess I would say family-oriented. Culture. I mean, I really don’t know and I don’t want—I can’t say from experience really.

Jeri feels that she has learned what she knows of Black culture from the limited contact and experiences she has had with Blacks. Jeri went on to share with me that she was disappointed with the diversity on campus of Deep South College. She wasn’t sure what had contributed to this lack of diversity, she mused, “Maybe people have this notion of what girls are like here [at Deep South], and because I know I had a similar notion coming in.” Jeri, whose mother was a teacher and a single parent, had the belief that women who attended Deep South College were all “snobs, Southern Baptist, and racists.” The main reason Jeri chose to attend Deep South was because of her mother. Her mother thought it meant a lot to be a Deep South graduate. It was against this personal background that many of Jeri’s ideas and beliefs about culture and diversity were formed.

What do I know about Black culture? I guess I don’t know. That’s why I have a hard time answering what I know about it because I really don’t know. I can’t tell you what I know, because I just don’t know.
Children of Charity Elementary School

Jeri, when asked to talk about her experience at Charity Elementary School, broke into a wide grin. She shared that one of the first things she noticed about the group of kindergarten students she worked with was their busyness. “I don’t know if this is from their background or their family history, but a lot of them were having a really hard time sitting there and doing things, behavioral issues.” This really struck a chord with Jeri. She expressed concern not only for the children in the class but for the classroom teacher as well. “How does the teacher have enough time? “There’s just one assistant that’s in there and there were several of us women and we were all helping someone and it was still taking way longer than the rest of the kids.”

Jeri went on to share that she felt that teaching in a situation such as one like Charity Elementary would be appealing to her. She stated, “I’d really actually like to teach in such a situation for a few years. I don’t know if I’d want to live in a city for my whole life. But you know, while I’m young, if I do decide to teach, then I would actually like to.
Preparation for Diversity

Describing her college preparation to work with diverse student populations, Jeri reported, “So far I’ve only taken the Race and Ethnic Relations class.” She went on to explain:

This was the only kind of experience I got anything out of, actually going to Charity Elementary. Because the other school I went to with my Foundations of Education class was—I think they were—I forget the percentage, but hardly any minorities at the school. We really didn’t talk about it in my education class, which is kind of sad, because it is foundations—basic level. I mean, we did talk about affirmative action and we were like along freedom road. That’s about it.

Jeri went on to say that she could not recall any special presentations, seminars, or discussions that were aimed specifically at helping prepare White preservice teachers for dealing with culturally diverse parents.

White Female Preservice Teacher—Nona

Growing Up White

Nona. Now this woman was different. For starters Nona was in her early 50s with a 14-year-old son of her own. Nona had
actually graduated from Deep South College once before in the early 1970s. After working many years in the family business with her husband, Nona has decided that more than anything else she wants to teach. Nona brought to the interview a high degree of maturity and many varied life experiences. She also brought a quick, infectious smile and a very nice sense of humor. The interview began with Nona describing her early years of growing up in a southern, urban city.

The neighborhood that Nona grew up in was very close to the state university where both her parents worked. Nona’s father was a university football coach and her mother worked part time at the ticket office of the same university. Nona’s father had a brain tumor when she was two, so his health was not good. So her parents, in trying to think ahead, bought a fraternity house and converted the upstairs into apartments. Nona indicated, “We lived on the old fraternity row, it was a rather interesting neighborhood. We had a wide variety of neighbors; we had a fraternity right across the street.” Most of the people that rented the apartments were football players at the state university who were also married. Because her father, the coach, was renting to them, they were very good. Nona’s early schooling was extremely interesting. Nona attended all-White public schools until her junior year of
high school. Nona told about her integration experience with a touch of sadness,

In 1972, it was my junior year—my junior year they merged Ligon [the all-Black school] and Broughton [the all-White school] together. We actually had two high schools in one facility that was made for one high school, which is definitely a problem. There were 640 people in my graduating class. We had trailers all over the place. It was such a crowded place. The first year we merged, we had two presidents of each class, one Black, one White. We had two sets of cheerleading people—they [school officials] tried to merge. I mean, it was just—they did their best, but it was a zoo; everybody everywhere, just crazy.

Nona proceeded to talk about the friendships she had with Blacks and other minorities as she was growing up. As a child she could not remember ever having a single Black friend. Nona explained, “Because I did not go to school with them—my neighborhood really was basically all white.” When I asked Nona to tell about her first friend who did not look like her, she told a very poignant and heart wrenching story.
Well, it’s interesting because I was always sort of oblivious, I guess. I know that probably my first close interaction with a Black person was the lady that came once a week to our house. My mother generally went out the door when she came in, because she looked after me and my brother and sister. She also did the ironing and things like that. I loved her thoroughly because she looked after me. Now you have to understand that when I was little that was highly unusual. My grandmother actually lived with us and I would not go to her. I would go to my brothers and my parents, and I would go to Ms. Brooks, who I loved. I would not go to my grandmother who also lived with us. So that’s strange I guess. I was extremely shy and I just was very selective in who I would be around, especially adults. I was just a child at this point. The interesting thing—my first really racism that I saw was actually from my father—and because I would always give Ms. Brooks a hug and a kiss before she’d leave. My dad usually wasn’t home from work by then, so I’d run and give Ms. Brooks a hug and a kiss, but one time my father was there and told me I couldn’t
do that. He didn’t say why, but I was very upset, and I asked, “Why can’t I do that?” You know, I could not understand that. My mother said, “Nona, just let it be.” I didn’t understand. I totally just thought this is the silliest thing I have ever heard. But it was the way my father was raised, you know, on a farm, 13 kids out in the mountains of Virginia. For some reason he found what I did inappropriate, something that’s just hard for me to understand. I remember also, the next week when Ms. Brooks was leaving, and my mother was watching me. Of course I going to Ms. Brooks because she was waiting for me to go run and hug her. But, as I looked at my mother I didn’t know what to do. Do I disobey my parents in front of my mother? No, but Ms. Brooks looks hurt. I think Ms. Brooks knew what was happening, I really do, because she saw my father, and I saw a reaction on her face at that time. Maybe she saw a reaction from him, I don’t know. I was hugging, but just sort of. When I think back about the whole incident, it’s just very odd. I guess there was just a part of my father that I didn’t understand.
That incident was one that Nona has never forgotten and never really ever discussed with her parents. Nona went on to talk about other interactions, as she grew older. One thing that she thought about was her advanced placement high school courses. Nona remembered that the racial makeup of the class changed very little when the two schools, Black Ligon and White Broughton merged. “Then I went to Deep South College. Deep South was not—oh gosh, need I say, in the 1970s when I went... not very diverse.”

Religion also played a very important part in Nancy’s life as she was growing up. Nona and her family grew up Lutheran. Today they attend a church that is 99% White. Nona recalled that there are probably a couple of Black families in the church that visit frequently; however, they are not members. Nona speculated on why that may be, “Even as diverse as my town is, I think the church is really not. But it’s an older church. My husband grew up in that church. It’s been around a long, long time and the membership is older.”

Racial Identity

Like many of the others, the question of racial self-identification made Nona pause and seriously think. She too
had never really spent much time at all thinking about the topic. She explained,

It’s something I don’t think about seriously. I don’t think about how I look at all. I mean, I do, but it’s not something I spend much time on. The identity, I really don’t think about it. We [White people] don’t find that a big part of the identity because it hasn’t had to be. To be totally honest, I really have never thought about it.

Since Nona had never really thought about the idea of racial self-identification, she honestly could not think of a single person who may have helped shape her view of her racial self. Said Nona, “I can’t say that anyone has specifically had a big part in that particular area of my life.”

Knowledge of Black Culture

Nona was asked to describe what she knew about Black culture. She replied,

Well, again, it’s something I haven’t thought about, any more than I’ve thought about—if somebody asked me about my culture, I’d be going, “Beats me!” I mean, I just sort of go along. Seriously, it’s not something I’ve spent time thinking about.
Nona continued, “I don’t know anything about Black culture. I mean my son probably has more—I know he does—he has a lot more Black friends than my daughter. I don’t know why that is.” After pausing to gather her thoughts Nona continued, “I know that many of my son’s friends have very similar upbringing. They live in our neighborhood, go to our schools. Again, I don’t really think about it.”

Children of Charity Elementary School

It was here, at the moment that we started talking about the children of Charity that Nona positively beamed. Her attitude, while pleasant from the very outset, was just a notch below jubilant. Talking about these children seemed to energize her. Nona could only remember one incident in particular that could be called a diversity “ah ha” moment. This occurred while she was teaching a lesson on Thanksgiving. Before we started the story I said, “What kinds of food—you know, what do you think goes with Thanksgiving.” What does Thanksgiving make you think of?” So they said all these things and then somebody said, “collard greens, or something,” and I thought, “You know, I never would have gone there.” My parents may have said something like that, but with
me, unh unh, because I’m never thankful for collard greens.

Nona went on to say that many of the responses of the children were exactly what she would have expected. Of the teachers, Nona noticed that they urged the children to present themselves in a certain way. Nona explained, “I noticed the teachers were wonderful; they were a little bit more, “Present yourself like a scholar.”” When asked what she meant by that, Nona replied,

The teacher would say, “Walk like a scholar,” you know? “I want you to go back to your seat and walk to the door like a scholar.” I thought “Okay.” That would—I would not have said that. Not that it was bad, but it just, there was a high expectation. The expectation was that you would represent yourself in a certain way. That was stressed more. Not that that was bad, but I just noticed because it occurred.

When Nona was asked how it felt to be placed in the unfamiliar position of being a racial minority she replied, “I really didn’t think about it, because they were just kids, basically.”
Preparation for Diversity

In terms of her perception of her preparation by the college to teach and reach culturally diverse students, Nona felt that the academic readiness of her students was more of a concern for her. “I think what I’m getting and what I concentrate on are just the different stages they’ll come to me as far as their academic ability, and where I go from there.” Nona went on to explain that both of her children are academically gifted, they “get it” quickly. Her concern is for those students who don’t get things quickly. Nona implied that there are some educators who either don’t have the time or don’t take the time to work with those students who may be slow learners, or may not get it on the first go around. Nona briefly elaborated on that point,

My biggest concern is, regardless of cultural background, is just if they come in behind in this area, how I’m going to help them to get where they need to be to move on.

Along those same lines, Nona was asked to discuss how prepared she felt she was to deal with the parents of her culturally different students. Once again Nona felt that the race or cultural background of neither the child nor the teacher made as much difference as the attitude of the
teacher. Nona explained, “If the teacher as well as the parent has the best interest of that parents’ child at heart, then they’re both going to be fine.”

White Female Preservice Teacher—Lisa

Growing Up White

Lisa was an outgoing athlete majoring in elementary education. Although Lisa is an athlete and has an outgoing personality, there was an initial shyness about her that I found particularly intriguing. The more we talked, the more comfortable Lisa appeared. Lisa shared that she grew up in a small town in the mountains of Virginia, where she attended schools that were primarily White, in an area that was primarily agricultural. Lisa elaborated with a little more detail about the schools she attended.

I went to a high school of about 800 kids that stretched from about a 45-mile radius—and we still only had 800 kids. The area that I grew up in was very rural and predominantly White. The schools had very few Black students.

Lisa went on to talk about the friendships which were formed during her high school years. Her status as an athlete gave her an opportunity to interact with others who were from
a racial background that was different from her own. Lisa indicated that there were a couple of Black girls on her basketball team, and for the most part they were all friends. Other than that she had the same classes with the same 15 people from sixth grade to twelfth grade. Students in this particular high school were tracked and never had classes with any other students. I asked Lisa what she meant by the term “tracked”?

Into AP, advanced placement, so once you got in you stayed unless you opted to take regular classes. So in all my classes there were 15 of us: one Black girl, no Black males and about 11 White girls. It was that way in every class except physical education. We took physical education with everybody else.

Reflecting upon her formative years, Lisa began to talk about the community in which she grew up. She recalled that she didn’t really live in a neighborhood—but down a road that wasn’t even paved until she was closer to middle school. She really didn’t even see herself living in a neighborhood, but on a back road that you’d drive down. She also remembered regularly going to her Southern Baptist church on Sunday
morning. None of the Black people who lived in the community attended the White church. Lisa explained,

There were no Black people who attended my church, but the Black church was a half-mile up on the same side of the road. A lot of my friends from the basketball team went to that church, so we would—I mean, I would—usually see them on the road, like we’d be on the road at the same time.

Lisa went on to explain that the two churches did have interactions once a year, during revival.

Racial Identity

When asked to describe her racial identity, Lisa replied without hesitation, “I’m just White.” She went on to share that she was descended from Europeans and her ancestors are of British origin. Her father had actually done a family tree. During his research he had discovered that Lisa’s mother’s side of the family is Scotch-Irish, while her father’s side is British. Lisa could not identify a particular person who helped to shape her racial identity. As a matter of fact she felt that more than anyone else she was most responsible for the formation and shaping of her racial identity.
I think it was more-or-less me, actually, just understanding what I was, more than somebody trying to teach me what I was. There’s not—where I’m from, there’s not a lot of racial tension, so I never knew that there was a lot of tension between different races because everybody pretty much—in a small town—we all got along. So I guess nobody ever taught me, “You’re White, you better always be proud of that,” or anything like that.

Knowledge of Black Culture

When asked about her knowledge of Black culture Lisa shared that she knows a lot more now than she did know. That knowledge is due in part to having a Black roommate during her 4 years at Deep South College. Lisa went on to elaborate on their relationship,

Jeanette has been my roommate for 4 years and she is one of my best friends. It’s kind of funny, my favorite type of music is politically active music, usually from the 50s or 60s. So I’d never watched BET [Black Entertainment Television] until I lived with her, I never knew anything about the culture, really. So, I learned a lot from her.
Lisa went on to share that for her this relationship never really put her over the edge as far as culture shock, as a matter of fact she and her Black roommate would usually make a big joke about it.

If we went to a restaurant, Jeanette would always be like, “I’m going to get some fried chicken.” She would play on what White people would consider—like what they would think of as Black culture. Then she would do the same thing to me, like, “Oh, you’ve got to always be washing your hair.”

Lisa went on to say that other than general knowledge types of things, like how she washed her hair and why she couldn’t wash it every day, there was not really much that surprised her about her Black roommate.

Children of Charity Elementary School

Lisa thought about her experience at Charity Elementary and began to share her impressions of the school and the children. Her first comment was that she thought they were really great kids. She did very quickly recall an incident that left an impression.

During one of my visits the third grade class was talking about Christopher Columbus. In most
predominantly White schools all the kids know who that is. His name was one of the very first names I ever heard in school. Well, at Charity the kids in this particular class would crack jokes like, “What did that White guy do?” One of the little girls cracked a joke like that, and the teacher had to tell her, “Don’t talk like that.”

One other thing that Lisa noticed was the obvious academic differences within the same classroom. In her mind Lisa had always thought of everyone as being equal in elementary school. At Charity she noticed a huge difference between the lower reading groups and the upper level reading groups. Lisa replied,

I don’t ever remember being separated into groups like that. It might just be because we didn’t do much cooperative learning back then either, but I just thought—that really surprised me. I don’t know if this is just an observation, but it just seemed like the ones that were in the lower group, you know, they didn’t seem as happy. They didn’t seem as involved in the classroom.

Lisa reflected back on her feelings of being a minority for a change. She shared that she was really okay with the
situation. She said, “It doesn’t bother me. I think it’s because growing up I never considered myself part of the—part of a majority. It’s like everybody was just one.” Lisa went on to say that she doesn’t notice when she’s a minority because she figures people are going to appreciate her not because she’s White but because of the person she is. She commented, “I would feel more intimidated with a gender difference than I would a racial difference.”

Preparation for Diversity

Lisa was asked to describe the extent to which she felt prepared to deal with racially or culturally different children. She replied, “I think I’m well prepared.” Although she has not yet finished all her education classes, Lisa feels that the Education Department at Deep South College has made a conscious effort to help their preservice teachers learn to teach all people. Lisa went on to share that she felt very comfortable with her preparation for dealing with the parents of her culturally different children with one exception,

I think I’ll be well prepared, maybe except for Hispanic parents, like ESL [English Second Language] students. I’ve never taken a foreign language, I think that will be really tough because I’ve only
had 7 years of Latin. So I think I would be nervous about meeting with those parents rather than any other parents, because I would be afraid of the communication barrier that might exist.

White Female Preservice Teacher—Kathy

Growing Up White

The first thing that struck me when she entered the interview room was the smile. Kathy had a bright, beautiful, and engaging smile. I would later find out that this young lady was a beauty queen. Kathy is a communications major who wants to teach kindergarten. Needless to say, Kathy presented herself as very articulate and outgoing. I had no problem at all eliciting responses during this interview. To the contrary, this interview had the feel of talking to an old friend. The first tidbit Kathy shared was that she grew up in a small town where everybody not only knew all about you, but all about your personal business as well. Kathy shared that she graduated from a small high school. Her graduating class only had 105 people. Kathy began to describe the neighborhood that she grew up in, I grew up on a street that was called a historical street, so the houses were real nice, and the
neighborhood was real nice. Behind us was kind of the rougher neighborhood, you went from a section of town that was all-White to a section of town that was all-Black. We were very segregated. The Black side of town was where all our shootings and stuff happened.

Kathy went on to recount that early on she was only told about the “Black” side of town. But once she got to high school she became friends with some of the Black people and would go over “there” occasionally, but not really that much. She explained,

They’d come see me. I mean, they were right behind me, and their youth center, their church youth center, was practically in my backyard, so they were always playing in our yard and stuff like that.

Kathy’s friendships with children from culturally different backgrounds began in the third grade. According to Kathy she and her third grade friends just “hung-out.” She shared that, “I started having friendships with the Black people when I was in third grade. We were all great friends.” Although Kathy had these friendships, not everyone in the community appreciated the relationships that were formed. “I had a lot of real good friendships with my Black friends which
was kind of looked at weird in my town—a lot of older people, a lot of old-fashioned beliefs.” Kathy noticed that once she got into high school, many of those friendships that were established early on began to change.

I hung out with everybody, but when I got into high school, some of my relationships got better with them, some of them got worse. A lot of them felt a lot of things being said about them, and being looked at weird around town—people looking at them different and being treated different, and discriminated against. So a lot of them got the attitude of being defensive with everything and assuming everybody was looking at them that way, whether they were or not. So a lot of friendships died down once they got older and could see that people were treating them different.

Kathy went on to say that this change in relationships was not something that was ever talked about. She shared, “It’s definite that Blacks are treated different in Albany. I guess people try to hide and kind of try to put it underneath the covers, so you don’t see it. But you know, even the teachers treat them different.”
Kathy talked about another area of her life that was affected by racial attitudes, church. Her church experiences were very much segregated. Kathy explained, “It was very, very separated until—when I was in seventh grade, we actually had a Black family move into our church and at first it was very, “What do you say to them? We don’t do the same things that they do in church! We don’t—Oh my God, what are we going to do?” Kathy went on to say that there were a few members who did reach out to this Black family and made relationships with them. This family, however, is still the only Black family in their church.

Racial Identity

Like many others before her, Kathy gave a two word description of her racial identity, “just Caucasian.” To Kathy this simply meant that her skin is white, that’s all, nothing more nothing less. Kathy went on to elaborate,

I’m just White. My skin’s white. I guess a lot of people interpret it in different ways, and after my sociology class, I’ve started checking the “other” box. I mean, why should I have to tell someone what color I am before they know me, before they meet me? Let them figure it out. I identify as White, but I
Kathy acknowledged that she really had never had to think about her race. She, like many other White women, had never been asked to racially self-identify. Kathy reported that she didn’t identify standings in the community with color. Kathy made this statement because she personally knows some Black people who are a whole lot classier than she is. What she finds ironic is when you see a Black person like that [classy], most people are like “Oh, they are so White. He’s not a Black guy, he’s so White.” Kathy went on to say, “I know White people who have the trashy attitude, who have the horrible attitude of, ‘I’m better than everybody else because I’m White.’” It is this kind of attitude that made her decide to check the “other” box on applications and surveys.

**Knowledge of Black Culture**

Kathy shared an interesting view of her knowledge of Black culture. Her knowledge of Black culture centered on her personal view of Black family interactions.

Their families are real close. They are very tight-knit families, but at the same time, I look-like when I’m walking around the grocery store and you
see a White mom and her child and a Black mom and her child, there are differences in how they handle their children. Like the White mom is more like, “Honey don’t do that.” The Black mom is like, “I’m gonna smack your butt!”

Kathy went on to say that she feels Black communities are closer and don’t judge each other as much as Whites do. One of the more interesting differences that Kathy felt exists, is in the area of girl-guy relationships,

The only way that I’ve really looked closely at the differences was more in like, girl-guy relationship-type ways; to the fact—I mean that’s really the only way I’ve ever separated and actually sat down and looked at it. I had a boyfriend one time that was like, “If you put on 20 pounds, this is over!” White guys are just so into, “You have to be this big around” and Black guys just seem to care if the girl’s happy, the girl’s personality. It’s not all about, “She has to be this big.” They would rather her be a healthy size than completely skinny.

For Kathy much of what she has learned about Black culture has been through observation and self-discovery. Kathy shared that she is usually regarded as a pretty perceptive
person who doesn’t hold grudges or looks at people as colors. Kathy stated, “I don’t look at people and say, ‘You’re Black, you’re White, you’re Mexican.’” Kathy went on to say that she would talk to anybody; it really doesn’t matter to her. She shared that she has great Black friends, great White friends, and that she is friends with Mexicans. Kathy also believes, based on her personal observations, that Blacks are not afraid to voice their opinions, they just say what they think, whether you like it or not.

Children of Charity Elementary School

One of the first things that Kathy noticed was that some of the kindergarten children in this all-Black elementary school were playing with White baby dolls. This made a strong impression on Kathy, who had personally grown up playing with only White doll babies. Kathy thought to herself, “There’s nothing here but Black children but they’re playing with White baby dolls. That struck me as odd.”

Kathy was asked how it felt to be placed in a cultural minority situation. She shared that she was actually very comfortable in such situations. “It didn’t bother me at all; the students and teachers were very open and receptive to me. They didn’t seem to care about my color.” Kathy went on to say
that at first a few of the kids were a little...suspect. “They definitely noticed there was something different about me.” Only a few of the students were open to her right away. Kathy recalled one particular little girl and her reaction to her,

There was one little girl who had the most reaction to me. She was kind of like, “Uh, I don’t want to go near you. You don’t look like everybody else I know.” But then another teacher or teacher assistant would come into the room that, you know, had black skin, and she would just run right to them.

This reaction made a strong impression on Kathy who really did not know how to respond to such a situation. “I didn’t know what was being said in her house.” Kathy shared that she had never had a child not run to her and not trust her. In all her dealings with children she had always been great. This particular situation truly cut deep, “Kids are my life and I love them. That’s what makes me happy. This kind of hurt. I was like, this child doesn’t like me because I’m White.” Kathy thought some more about what had happened and then made a connection to how she would feel if she were to be placed in an all-Black situation.

I’ve always thought I would feel weird in an all-Black situation, because one of my Black friends was
complaining that she didn’t want to come to class and all this, and I was thinking about it. Most of my classrooms were all White people and this one Black girl. She’d be sitting in the back of the class, and that was it. Nothing was said to her. The teacher never called on her. I started thinking, if I walked into a classroom with all Black people, I would feel very uncomfortable. I would feel very uncomfortable in an all-Black situation if there weren’t any kids there. But around kids, it’s hard to make me feel very uncomfortable.

Preparation for Diversity

Kathy viewed her preparation for teaching with skepticism. She shared, “In most of my classes there might be one Black person, that’s it. But most of my classes are all White.” According to Kathy, this lack of cultural diversity in the education courses at Deep South College has left her ill-prepared to deal with the culturally different students she may encounter in a public school setting. Kathy could only recall one class in which issues of cultural diversity were discussed.
The sociology class that I took was basically the only one that I’ve ever had in my life and probably will ever have, that actually covers Blacks being in the classroom and all that. It just feels like people just don’t want to talk about it. If it’s brought up, it’s more of a taboo than anything. The attitude is more or less, why do you want to talk about that?

As she spoke, one could almost feel the frustration welling up in her voice. Kathy continued,

This topic has been brought up in classes, and it’s more like teachers just kind of scan over it. It’s not a deep conversation. I would honestly like to know. I think, personally, I could deal with a Black family just fine, and Black kids—I’ve been in classrooms and they’re wonderful. I mean, they act up as much as the White kids do, and I think their parents are probably more voiced. As a teacher you just have to be open to the whole idea of diversity. There are different ways to handle different people.
Growing Up White

Monique was a quiet, demure young lady from New York State. There were times during the interview that I had to strain to fully hear what Monique was saying. Monique had not been in the area long. As a matter of fact, she had just moved to this area in August to attend Deep South College. Monique once thought she wanted to be a teacher but has since changed her mind after several not-so-pleasant student teaching experiences. One of her teaching experiences was in a small, private, ritzy school. Her second experience was in a poor, all-Black school in the slums. Intrigued by these statements, I asked her to elaborate on these experiences.

I don’t really know what happened in those experiences. I did one in a small, private, little ritzy school and I didn’t like that one because the children just didn’t appreciate anything. My other experience was in a poor, all-Black school in the slums and I loved it. Primarily because they wanted to be there, they wanted to learn and they just loved the attention. Then I worked in a school with abused children, this is the place I liked the most.
This was more like working on behavioral issues rather than just teaching. I never really did any curriculum or academics. It was mainly maintaining behavioral problems and stuff.

It was this last experience that has led Monique to believe that she may want to go into counseling as a career rather than teaching.

I shifted the conversation back to the life experiences that Monique had while growing up in New York. Monique shared that she grew up in a very small town whose population numbered around 500. Monique recalled that there were only 62 people in her graduating class and even this size was attained only after two schools merged. Prior to the merger there were only 31 people in her class. Monique went on to say that although she lived in New York, her town was about three-and-a-half hours from New York City. Since her town, and her high school, was so small, “You knew everything about everyone. It wasn’t just their name. You knew their background, their family, you knew anything about them.” The same thing pretty much held true for her neighborhood. Monique lived “Out in the country,” as she called it. There were very few houses and even fewer neighbors. Monique indicated that since there were so few houses and neighborhoods, they all got to know each
other pretty well. Not only that, but there were precious few things to do in “town” Monique explained,

There were a few houses here and there but my backyard was like 500 cows and that was it. The only thing in my town besides the general store is a Kraft factory where they make Breyer’s Yogurt. That’s the only thing in my town, just a factory where they make yogurt—Breyer’s Yogurt. That’s the only thing in the whole town. Not only that, but, you actually have to drive out of town to get to the grocery store or a gas station.

Racial Identity

I asked Monique to describe her racial identity. Monique was ready with an answer. She replied, “I don’t know. I was White just like everyone else.” Monique continued on, “Everyone acted the same and we all looked the same so it never seemed odd or strange.” Then when “that one person came in” everything changed.

Everyone just got a new perspective on people, because he walked and talked different. He was from the city and obviously he dressed different, he talked different, he was more like a focus to me. He
Monique continued to talk more about her experience with her first Black person. She explained how he ended up in a very White town with no other Blacks.

We had this exchange program for inner city kids to come in, and they can live with a family here, but it’s not always by choice. It’s only for the people in our school. I guess his family moved up here when his mother got killed or something and he had to move in with his closest relative. He didn’t want to be here anyway. Obviously it felt uncomfortable for him—he was the only Black person in a town of 700 people, so it had to be a really big change for him.

Monique went on to say that he did eventually make friends, “After a while he did make friends with all the ones who acted like him, all the White troublemakers.” This one experience was the defining moment for Monique when it came to
how she viewed culturally different people. As far as relatives or friends, her parents were the primary influences in the development of her racial self-identity. Monique still states, “I really have never really thought about my race. I’m just a White person, common, whatever. Regular, plain, boring, like every other person in the world.”

Knowledge of Black Culture

This section of the interview was predictably short given the very limited racial and cultural exposure and experiences that Monique had had during her lifetime. When asked what she knew about Black culture Monique had this to say,

Not a lot. I’ve been to a few museums, as far as college field trips, as far as the paintings and things like that, but nothing really, about the background, the past. I just don’t know a lot about Black people. I definitely have lots of room for learning, but just through my personal experiences, which are very slim, I saw that I have a lot to learn.

Children of Charity Elementary School

Monique’s Charity Elementary School reminded her of the inner-city school in Syracuse that she had spent some time in.
On her way to Charity, she got a little scared because she was going down back roads. Once she got to the school she discovered that it was really quite nice. Just like the kids in Syracuse, the kids of Charity liked to learn. Monique noticed that the Charity teacher made learning fun. She also noticed that the teaching was very much hands-on. Monique was also impressed by the fact that even though the school did not appear to have many resources, the teacher made it fun, so they were learning more and they wanted to learn more. There were a few things about the class and the children that were very different for this small-town girl. Monique began to talk about the children,

They’re well, everyone in the class is Black. They all dress the same. I don’t know if it’s a dress code but—blue shirt, blue pants. Active. Very active. As soon as the teacher walked out of the room, they all got up singing and dancing—it was funny. I did notice they were singing rap songs, so I didn’t know if that was okay or not. The funny thing was, this was kindergarten and these kids knew every word of the song.

Monique did immediately notice that the classroom teacher for this group of kindergartners was White. This did not seem
odd nor did it cause any problems for this class of all-Black students. There was an incident that did stay with Monique and caused her to ponder.

The teacher was reading a story about a turkey that wants to be different colors. When they got to the color white—the turkey wanted to be white—and one of the kids goes, “Yeah, cause white’s prettier.” Right there I’m like, “Uhhhh.” It just brought something up in my head, and the teacher was just like, “Oh,” and went on to the next color. The assistant in the room, who was Black, looked up like, “What’s going on? Why isn’t she saying anything more about that?” The only thing the teacher said was, “Oh well, you should be happy with who you are, and that was the lesson of the story.” I just would have said something more about why you would consider that color [white] prettier.

Preparation For Diversity

Monique was asked to share how prepared she felt to teach and effectively reach out to culturally different students. “Not very,” she replied. As she thought about Deep South College, she shared that there is not a lot of diversity at
the college. Her concern is that there are few minorities of any kind at Deep South, especially Blacks. She commented, “You really don’t see any thing other than White people. You just don’t get experiences with that.” At her other college Monique took a lot of classes for diversity, but those classes, similar to her classes at Deep South College, had no minorities in them. She felt that even those classes did not prepare her for diversity. When asked if she felt that there was a need to be prepared she stated,

I really didn’t think that racism was much of a big deal anymore. I mean, it’s illegal so—I didn’t even think about it. I didn’t realize that people were still—just because of the color of your skin—judging you. I just assumed when the law said it stopped, it stopped. Because I had a lack of experiences, I really didn’t know it was out there. If I sat down and talked to every Black person, I’m sure there’s one experience at least, in their life where they’ve been discriminated against. That was a shock to me.
Growing Up White

Dara was 21 years old and a native Floridian. Dara presented herself as a no-nonsense kind of girl. Her approach to this interview was very pragmatic and straightforward. This interview had almost the feel of a job interview. To get the interview started, Dara shared that her hometown in Florida was very small, so small, in fact, that it only had three stoplights and one grocery store. In this small town one had to go out of town to get to the local Wal-mart. Interestingly, this small town was rife with diversity. According to Dara, just on the street that she lived there were Mexicans, Asians, and Blacks. It was in this middle-class subdivision that Dara began to establish some of her long-held ideas about race and culture.

When asked about relationships that were established in school, Dara reported that she was the kind of person who was trying to know everybody. Dara viewed herself as one of the rare persons who had friends in every group. For Dara this attitude was more prevalent in high school versus middle school. It was, however, a middle school incident that made one of the most lasting cultural impressions for Dara. This
incident centered on a Black female coach and her selection of a volleyball squad. When all was said and done this Black coach had to choose between Dara and a lesser skilled (according to Dara) Black player. The coach chose the Black player over Dara. “Later on the coach told me that she picked the Black player because she was the only Black girl that tried out,” said Dara. This didn’t sit too well with Dara, especially when at a later game the coach told Dara that the team had lost that game because of the Black player. For Dara, the entire situation just left a really nasty taste in her mouth. Dara recalled the conversation she had with the coach, 

Okay so you’re talking to me now and it’s supposed to make me feel better? You’re telling me that if you had picked me to be on the team, we wouldn’t have lost this game, so it’s my fault. You know, I should have said something before, if I didn’t think it was fair. I mean, it wasn’t that I didn’t even think it was fair because she was Black—it was I didn’t think she deserved it because I really thought I was a better player than she was. Everybody else thought so too, and nobody understood it, and now she’s telling me why. That was so not cool.
When asked what effect, if any, this incident had on relationships with other Blacks Dara said that her best friend growing up was Black. Dara then corrected herself by saying that this best friend was actually half-Black and half-White. Dara reported that this friendship posed no problem for her parents; however, that changed as Dara got older and this best friend’s brother came into the picture.

When I got older, I would go down to her house to visit. One time her older brother, who is a year older than me, I think, he said something about how good I was looking or something like that. As it so happened, my stepmother heard it and she was like, “Look, I don’t have anything against this, but you don’t need to be around him.” I was like, “Okay, whatever. I’m only down here for two weeks anyway.”

When asked whether this had ever presented a problem before, Dara replied, “Yes, it actually has.” With a slight smile on her face, Dara shared that while in middle school and extending into high school, one of her really good friends was a guy who was multi-racial: Black, White, and Indian. Although her father liked him, he did share with her his reservations, My dad knew I liked him, and he was like, you know, if you start dating him it’s going to cause some
problems. I asked him what he meant. He was like, “I’m not going to care, and your mom is not going to care, but some people will.” I really didn’t understand what all the fuss was about. We never did date or anything, but we were always together. I still don’t understand it. Some people can’t deal with it. Some people can’t handle it.

Dara was asked to share any cultural experiences as they related to her religious beliefs and upbringing. Dara replied, “Church. My step-dad was a minister.” Dara remembers going to a Baptist church as a small child. Her father was a pastor in several different churches during his career. Dara shared that his goal was to have a church that was about half and half, half black and half white. She remembered that he actually achieved that goal in one church where he was the pastor. She reported,

My dad decided that this is what I want. I want this kind of church and the Lord accepts anybody even if we don’t. Sometimes there were more White people than Black people and sometimes there were more Black people than there were White. It was normal. It was just whatever happened and called you about it.
Racial Identity

When asked to describe her racial identity, Dara crossed her arms across her chest, tilted her head to the side and very curtly replied, “I don’t even see race.” Dara continued on to say that she has never felt like, “So I’m White. Look at me. When I am asked to identify my race or color I say I’m red,” she replied. Dara was asked to expand on the above comment. She very quickly spouted,

I’m like, “I’m red,” and they’re like, “What?” I’m non, I’m Red. I remember talking to an old, old, White minister. He told me about a conversation he had with someone who told him that there wasn’t going to be no Black people in heaven. He just looked at this man and he said, “What do you mean there aren’t going to be no Black people in heaven?” He said, “Pastor Lewis, I’ve been saved all my life.” He continued on, “There ain’t going to be no White people in heaven either,” and the other man was like, “What? You mean none of us is going to heaven?” Pastor Lewis said, “There’s only going to be red people in heaven. People that are really washed in blood.” He said the other man just looked at him and he went, “Wow.” That’s where I got that
from, so every since he told me that story, I’ve always said that I’m red. I’m Red. I’m not White, I’m not Asian, I’m Red. So I check “other.” That’s just how I see myself. I don’t see myself as really part of this or really part of that. I guess I look at it in a lot more broad and different perspective than other people.

Dara felt that her faith, especially her faith in God had gone a long way toward helping shape her sense of racial identity. She also shared that everyone you come in contact with influences your cultural and racial development in some way. Dara felt that it was really important for her to try to really talk to a person before she decided, “Either I can or cannot relate to them or see what we do or don’t have in common.” She went on to say that she believed you really can’t, or shouldn’t, have any preconceptions about anybody.

Knowledge of Black Culture

Dara shared with me what she felt she knew about Black culture. Dara’s knowledge of Black culture centered on personal experiences that she had had growing up and interacting with Blacks.
I would say that from what I know, as a whole, they are people that have been hurt in the past and I don’t think I ever felt it was right. I know it was wrong. I also think they are people that take pride in their past, in their culture itself, and it is important to them. From what I see and from what I understood from the African Americans who I know, they are home people, family people. Most of the time they are church people. Even if they’re not, even if they’re not living that kind of life, they tend to be religious. I think that’s awesome.

When asked how she knew what she knew about Black culture, Dara replied that she had been around it and had been “observing.” She indicated that her personal experiences would be the biggest way that she has learned what she knows—more than being taught it. When asked whether her information was correct or not, Dara laughed and said,

To the people I learned it from, yes. Whether it’s correct to society, I don’t know. Because I really—as a society, I think our society is really screwed up so I don’t think there’s a whole lot of things we know. But the people I learned it from and saw it from—it’s right to them. What’s right to them may
not be right to you, but it just like what’s right
to me may not be right to you or everyone else and
it’s not a problem.

Children of Charity Elementary School

Dara shared with me that she walked into the Charity
experience with somewhat of a prejudice. She reported, “I have
an issue with charter schools in general. I guess because my
first experience was a bad experience. It wasn’t Charity
Elementary, but my bad experience.” Dara went on to relate
that her general impression of Charity was that it was no
different than walking into any other school. She elaborated,
“It was just—you know, it was a school—full of kids who were
there to learn just like any other school you walk into.
Interestingly enough Dara did not share any personal stories
about the children she observed and worked with at Charity.
Instead, she talked exclusively about going to field
experiences such as this one every semester. Although she went
to Charity, she did not particularly enjoy it, she indicated,
“For me it’s hard to go do stuff like—I mean, to go to schools
and—I have to do it so much every semester, because I’m in the
Education Department.” She did share that, “I went with the
hope or prospect I guess of learning from the kids, to try and
figure out a little bit about their world and their role there."

Preparation for Diversity

Dara was asked to describe the extent to which she felt Deep South College had prepared her to teach culturally or racially different children. Speaking strictly from an Education Department point of view, Dara articulated,

I think that with the requirement that the Education Department here has, a lot of times they can’t address everything and they can’t send you into every single school because that would be impossible. But, you know, I think that they do a good job of making you aware that there are these different cultures and that you should not act differently towards them, but that you should learn from them and draw from them.

White Female Preservice Teacher—Jemina

Growing Up White

Jemina. This woman came into the room with the air of expectation. She came in with a big smile on her face and a spring in her step. As we began the interview it was obvious
that this woman loved to talk. There was a certain air about her that also made her easy to talk to. Jemina began to share with me a little about the community that she grew up in. This senior physical education major was born and raised in one of the larger cities south of Deep South College. Jemina lived in a community which was somewhat older, with very little racial diversity. In terms of diversity, the city itself was diverse but very racially segregated. Jemina revealed,

There are a few African American families in our neighborhood; they live right around the corner. But then, the whole one-side of our town is African American. It’s really one little area that is right down a hill going towards our high school in the area. It’s kind of separated, more than you would think it would be, but it’s the good old boys back home. It’s a typical Southern town.

When asked about friendships that were formed when she was growing up, Jemina stated that she was a friend to everybody. She elaborated, “I got along with every type of person; I never really had problems.” The schools that Jemina attended were for the most part integrated. She did share that just like any other typical high school, you still had your groups and cliques. Jemina explained,
There was no complex between any type of color or ethnic group. We had our cowboys who would hang out in the pit and then all the preppy seniors would hang out on top of the grand stairs. Then we had our little thug group and the little girls and little boys would hang out; they were funny. Then we had some, just like mix—like all in—I always floated from crowd to crowd because I always hung out with everybody. There wasn’t really any separation, like on purpose. Friends just hung out with friends.

Jemina also talked about the friends who she would invite to her house. After reflecting for several minutes she remembered that there was one Black girl who she invited over to her house on a somewhat regular basis. Sharetta, a fellow cheerleader, was the only Black person that Jemina remembers ever coming to her house as an invited friend. Jemina’s parents viewed this relationship favorably, however when asked if the relationship would have been with Sharetta’s brother, the response from Jemina was very different.

My parents say they wouldn’t have a problem with it, but I think they might. I think, I don’t know. The reason I think that is because my mom’s views are my mom’s views. It doesn’t matter if it’s about color,
or about school. If she thinks I need to be in school, then I need to be in school. I think she would allow me to date a Black man but she will let it be known that she doesn’t like it. If it were someone else’s child, she wouldn’t see anything wrong with it. If it were her child, then she would see something wrong with it. My sister Shannon had a lot of friends who were guys and a couple of them were African American. They would go out, and my mom was more suspicious and skeptical when she went out with him than she was with anybody else.

Jemina then went on to say something truly fascinating, “It’s not my mom’s fault, but her views need to change. She needs to learn more about trusting people.” Jemina then went on to add, “I know she grew up during a time that was different than now. She wasn’t taught that from her mom or dad.”

Racial Identity

When asked to describe her racial identity, Jemina indicated that she was not quite sure what that meant. After thinking and reflecting for a moment she then replied, “That’s
a hard one. Do you mean like Caucasian?” She then continued by saying,

I am Italian mixed with Lithuanian. I’m really not like the English people. I come from a different background. My family is different from everybody else’s. My grandparents live in New Jersey. Their whole culture is different from ours because of where we live. My uncle is married to a Jewish girl and he is Catholic. That is a hard thing to try to raise children—Catholic or Jewish. Those are pretty different. As for me, I guess I’m just Caucasian.

When asked if she ever had to think about this particular question before, Jemina replied, “No.” As a matter of fact, she shared that she never ever thinks about it. Said Jemina, “It’s not as troubling for us, because everybody is the same. We don’t have to think about, ‘Who am I? ’ ‘What is my background? ’” Everybody looks like us, so we are not ever left to wonder about it.”

Jemina was asked if there was a person, relative, friend, or otherwise that had helped shape her racial identity. To which she replied, “No, not really.” She went on to say that her grandparents, on her father’s side of the family, the Italian side, were probably her biggest influence as it
relates to racial identity. Jemina went on to share some interesting stories about her Italian grandparents,

They do certain things that we don’t do, and they do certain things that we do that other people don’t do. They are just alcoholics, if I can say that. They drink all the time. That is their culture. That is up North and being Catholic; it’s just how it is. Down here if my dad asks for a drink on a Sunday, we basically get cursed out. It’s just different.

Knowledge of Black Culture

Jemina had some interesting notions about Black culture. When asked to share these notions this is what she said,

I know that there is not always a full family. I’m not saying everybody, but a lot of them. I’d say there is a prevalence of single-parent families, which makes it harder on the children and the parents too. I know that they don’t necessarily speak like everybody else. They don’t write and talk exactly like what the real English is supposed to be. That doesn’t mean they are not as intelligent.

Jemina went on to articulate the various sources from which she has learned this information. Jemina explained,
How did I learn? Just hearing it, and I’ve had some experiences with African American children. I’ve had experience with every type of child. I worked at a special populations camp. It was more of a special needs camp really. I learned some of it there, because we had a lot of training. I guess I learned most of what I know from people. Also the news, and that is sometimes a bad place to get your information because sometimes it’s biased. I also learned it in school. In Psychology we learned about different populations, and how expectations are different for the different groups.

Jemina admitted that she did not know whether or not her information was true. She went on to elaborate, “Your views have to change with more experiences. I wouldn’t let a few bad experiences change my positive views.”

**Children of Charity Elementary School**

Jemina spent time in the kindergarten classroom when she visited Charity Elementary School. For her, there were few, if any racial or diversity “ah-ha” moments. She did recall one particular situation that she shared with me,
There was this one little girl who was coloring a picture yellow. I was like, “What are you doing?” She said, “It’s pretty.” I didn’t know if she meant that she wanted to color her person yellow, or if they didn’t know what it meant because they were so young, or if they were already being taught racial attitudes.

While working with the kindergarteners, Jemina did a variety of exercises with them. In the short time that she was engaged with them, some immediate bonding began to take place. She reported, “All they wanted was attention. They loved me after I spent 45 minutes with them. That was really shocking.” Probing a little, I asked Jemina how she felt about being placed in a minority situation. She indicated that at first she felt uneasy because,

I wasn’t in my normal environment. I’d never been in that situation before. My high school was half and half. Not all the classes I was in gave me much experience with it. While at Charity, at first I was kind of uneasy. Not even at first, it was before I went, that I was unsure. When I got there, they were just awesome, and they welcomed me and were happy, and they loved me to death. It was easier then. It
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broke my heart to have to leave, it was so sad. But at first I was uneasy of how they would accept me or how they would look at me. I guess that is what everybody goes through if they are a minority. You are wondering how people are going to look at you and what they are going to think about you. Things like if I’m walking down the street are they going to think I’m trying to steal something. I don’t have to think about that every day. That is not a part of my life because of my skin color.

**Preparation for Diversity**

Jemina was asked to describe the extent to which she felt she had been prepared to deal with children who were culturally different from herself. Her response was swift and unwavering, “Not at all.” Jemina went on to say that she thought the topic might have been mentioned a couple of times in her Methods courses. “I really think they should add more,” she said. Jemina’s other concern was the lack of preparation in dealing with the parents of their minority students. “I don’t remember ever being taught how to deal with parents at all. I guess that is just what we are going to have to learn.”
Growing Up White

Chrissy is a sophomore majoring in Early Childhood Education. Chrissy presents herself as a very bright and bubbly young woman. She came into the interview with a smile on her face and a definite desire to talk. I had no trouble at all getting Chrissy to talk about herself or any other topic. As we began the interview, she shared that she wants to be a kindergarten teacher when she grows up. Like many of the other White females in this study, Chrissy grew up in a predominately White neighborhood and attended church in a very White, traditional, conservative, Baptist church. As a matter of fact it was her church and church-related activities that Chrissy focused on as we talked about her early formative years. She went on to elaborate on her church activities.

I’ve been in the same church ever since I was born. It’s Baptist, traditional, and pretty conservative. It’s also predominately White. Over the years, more African Americans have come and now we even have like, seven in the choir that sing each week.

When asked to describe the schools that she attended, Chrissy replied, “pretty White.” She elaborated,
There are probably about 10 high schools in our county. In the far west end, which is part of the county, there are three or four high schools that are all predominantly White. Then there is an area of the county that is predominantly Black. Then there are some that are in the country. They are predominantly White.

When asked how students were assigned to various schools Chrissy explained that you basically apply to go to whatever high school you desired.

When you get to high school, each high school has a specialty program. You can apply to be in a specialty program in another high school if you are interested in that program. But mostly everyone went to the high school in his or her own neighborhood. I think it’s crazy what you do here. I think it’s a good idea for integration, but it is so complicated. I think people are more comfortable with the people that they live around.

Chrissy was asked to talk about her high school friends, who they were, what they looked like. She explained that hers was a preppy high school that was very upper middle-class. Her
friends came from mostly upper middle-class homes. When asked if she had any Black friends in high school, Chrissy said no. I didn’t. In high school I really didn’t. It wasn’t even that I minded that, but there wasn’t really an opportunity for it. The African Americans hung together, and that is what it seemed like they wanted. That was fine.

Racial Identity

Like many others before her, when asked to describe her racial identity, Chrissy replied, “I would say White or Caucasian.” She continued on to say, “I don’t know how to explain it. Skin color doesn’t bother me. I know that there are things that you think of immediately when you see someone that has a different skin color. But I would never not be friends with someone, or not talk to someone, or associate with someone just because they were of a different race.” Chrissy did report that while in high school, she did have some friends whose families were from Korea. These students were an accepted and integral part of the cliques that were formed by certain groups. As far as Chrissy could tell, these students were not discriminated against at all. She reasoned that they fit into the various cliques and other groups
because there were fewer of them. “With the African Americans I guess they felt like they had a strong enough group to be a group.”

When asked if there were any people who were instrumental in helping shape her racial identity, her grandparents immediately came to mind,

My grandparents were definitely living in the generation that they grew up in. They don’t act that way on the outside, but they will make comments. The comments they make are pretty much against African Americans. It makes me cringe when they say it. They are my grandparents and I’m not going to correct them. They are definitely living in the generation that they grew up in where it was separate. A lot of times it seems like they feel like it should always be that way. My mom and dad never said anything about it. They didn’t say do it or don’t do it.

Knowledge of Black Culture

In her discussion of her knowledge of Black culture, Chrissy admitted that she did not know a whole lot about Black culture. She commented, “I guess I basically know that they like different types of things.” Chrissy continued,
They have different kinds of music and food. All that kind of cultural stuff is different. All the time you are going to have people—White people that prefer something that a Black person likes, or a Black person that prefers something that a White person would like. There is a definite crossing over. For the majority though, they like this style, and these like that style.

Chrissy stated that she gained her knowledge of Black culture primarily through observation. “Just watching people,” she said. Chrissy talked about her observations of Black worship services.

Black churches meet for 2 or 3 hours, and they are loud and really into it. In the White church you don’t shout “Amen!” You don’t get up, and clap your hands and sing and raise your hands up. The preacher preaches for 30 minutes and that is it. It is really routine. I think the Black church is more wherever you feel the Spirit is leading you, you do. I think that is cool. I went to a Black church on a mission trip and I loved it. It was so cool because it really felt like they were there. They were feeling it and I don’t feel that way in a White church.
Children of Charity Elementary School

As she reflected on the time that she spent at Charity Elementary School, Chrissy was able to recall one very vivid memory of her time spent there. She shared this memory,

One day I went to read to a child, and we sat down and we read the book and did the activity. She just wanted to talk. I didn’t care about the reading really. It was important, but she needed to talk. I could tell. She talked for probably 5 or 10 minutes. I don’t think she even took a breath. She was spilling it all. I could tell she just needed someone to listen. I just let her talk. She was a kindergartner. As she talked, she was letting me in on all this information. She was saying how her sister was in Washington, DC and she never gets to see her. Her daddy is in jail and he wrote to her mom and her mom won’t write back. That upset her. Do they think that is normal? I wonder what was going on with her parents? It was all this “stuff.” It really hit me, hearing a kindergartner say, “My daddy is in jail.” It’s hard because you wonder why they think their dad is in jail.
When asked if her experience at Charity had changed her view as far as Black children in general Chrissy replied, I guess it made me realize how I needed to be really aware that how every word I was saying was important. It all needed to be something that they could use or something that made them feel good. At any point for the reading or coloring or anything, I made a point to pat them on the back or give them a hug. Touch is so important to kids. If they were coloring something, I would be sure to say, “Oh my gosh, that is so pretty. I really like how you did that.” They kind of just looked at me like, “Really?”

Preparation For Diversity

Chrissy shared that her preparation for working with diverse groups of students has left a lot to be desired. When asked to tell to what extent she felt that she had been prepared by the college she replied, “I don’t know.” Chrissy explained that she had a few diversity seminars but, “They have done nothing for me.” She elaborated on the diversity seminars,
It’s called diversity training but it’s just bringing someone of another race in to talk. Doing surveys, and games and that kind of thing. It just wasn’t effective. I don’t know that I learned anything because there is not a certain area that I have a hang-up with.

When asked about her readiness to communicate with culturally diverse parents, Chrissy stated that she was a communication minor, thus she wasn’t terribly worried. She did go on to say that she thought it important that you know as much as you can about the child’s background before dealing with parents. Said Chrissy, “It will definitely make communication possible for everyone. That [communication] is the key for the child being successful—having direct communication with the parents.

**View from the Outside: Charity Teachers Weigh In**

Another facet of this research project was consideration of the response by the teachers of Charity elementary school to the young preservice teachers who came into their class to interact with their students. Each of the five teachers at Charity had two of the preservice teachers come into their classroom to interact with their students. Of the five
teachers, two chose to give feedback for this research project. All of the feedback from the Charity teachers was positive. Ms. Lewis was extremely impressed not only with the participation and interaction within her classroom but the preparation of the preservice teachers as well. Ms. Lewis had this to say about the Deep South students,

Having the Deep South College students working with one or two students every week helped each individual student’s reading and readiness skills along with their comprehension skills while reading. The preservice teachers were very pleasant when asked to help the Charity students with their writing. They came prepared, along with their materials. I really enjoyed working with each Deep South student this year.

Ms. Smith, another Charity teacher had this to share: The interaction between my students and the Deep South students was very positive. For example, a majority of my students looked forward to working with the Deep South students every week. I can recall when the Deep South students were out on break due to a holiday, one of my students’ replied, “The lady did not come and help me read today, Ms.
Let the Dialogue Begin

Smith.” You can imagine the amazement I felt at that moment because this particular student was inspired to read more. I was amazed because we had just completed reading 2 hours prior to the time that the Deep South students would normally come to our classroom.

The Charity teachers did not notice any different type of treatment on the part of the all-White Deep South teachers towards the all-Black Charity Elementary students.

Summary

The collected data from the interviewees revealed that each is a different woman with her own unique traits and cultural life stories. Their friendships, educational, personal, and religious experiences have all played a vital role in shaping how they view their cultural selves as well as how they act in a multicultural world. These factors have also had a profound effect on the professional development of each woman. Each of the interviewees has been able, in their own special and unique way, to start the process of lifelong cultural learning and adaptation. More detailed analysis of the collected data is presented in Chapter Five.
There is nothing inherently wrong with being aware of color... It is only when character is attached to color, when privilege is tied to color, and a whole galaxy of factors that spell the difference between success and failure in our society are tied to color... that it becomes a deadly, dreadful, denigrating factor among us all... that we have two nations, black and white, separate, hostile, unequal—John Hope Franklin, 1993 (Mazel, 1998, p. 102).

The purpose of this research project, as outlined in Chapter One, was to explore the personal and educational experiences of White female preservice teachers. This research effort has also provided an avenue for White preservice teachers currently enrolled in a college, teacher preparation program to amplify their voice, share their detailed stories about their unique and individual cultural development.

For this study, 10 of the 20 students that were enrolled in SOC 335 chose not to participate in the Charity Elementary field experience. Each of the 10 White female preservice teachers was interviewed in a secluded area located on the campus of Deep South College. I was responsible for reserving the meeting room. The data were collected using open-ended interview questions, field notes, and audiotapes. Member checking was also used for the purpose of accuracy, clarification, and data correction.
At the beginning of each interview, before the questioning began, I went over the confidentiality document and secured my signature and that of the interviewee. The purpose and goal of the research was discussed and the interviewee was given an opportunity to ask questions.

The interviewees were college students enrolled in a teacher education preparation program. They each were either committed to teaching or at least seriously considering teaching as a career. These women grew up in various states and cities in the United States.

In this chapter, several major themes surfaced for analysis from data collected during the interviews with the identified sample. In understanding themes, Patton (2002) offered the notion that, “the core meanings found through content analysis are often called patterns or themes” (p. 453). These key themes have been identified and expanded on in an attempt to interpret meaning for the experiences and perceptions shared with me by the White female preservice teacher interviewees.

One of the first barriers to present itself in analyzing the results of this research was the lack of extensive, specific literature, and available qualitative research on how White preservice teachers’ background and prior experiences
may influence their future classroom practice. Most current research focuses on the White **inservice** teacher, not preservice. Johnson (2002b) offered excellent advice as she described her own research results of six “White classroom teachers” (p. 155). Although Johnson’s study only included White inservice classroom teachers, this same valid and timely advice is offered here to readers of the results of this research. “The life experiences of these White teachers lend support to ways we might restructure teacher preparation to help White teachers develop racial awareness (p. 165). Johnson also reports that even when predominantly White teacher education classes focus on race in the curriculum, without the presence of diverse standpoints there is the danger that the dialogue will privilege White viewpoints and add little to an understanding of how concepts of race and racism are experienced from different racial standpoints (p. 166).

This research did not encompass or capture the entire landscape of teacher education programs for all White preservice teachers. This research was designed solely as a skylight into the lives of White preservice teachers in this study. It was by no means a reflection of 100% of White preservice teachers nationwide, and it was not designed for that purpose.
Racial Separation

I examined the White preservice teacher’s comments regarding various cultural and racial experiences that occurred while growing up and extending into their current college experiences. Many of these experiences highlight distinct and very visible racial separation in the lives of the interviewees’ in this study. As a result of a close examination of the interviewees’ personal, social, religious, and educational experiences, racial separation surfaces as one of the themes.

Emergent Themes

You don’t go in after dark

Kelsey remembered and shared, very matter of fact, that she didn’t even remember any Black people being in her neighborhood “Until the last 10 years.” She also acknowledged that her side of town was the “rich side of town, older and very upper-class.” But, a mere three miles down the road was the Black side of town, where, “you didn’t go in after dark.” The observances made by Kelsey and other White women in this study point to the systemic and insidious nature of the privilege present in their lives. For this group of women, the
lives they lived, the neighborhoods in which they grew up, were completely normal.

In analyzing the interviewees’ comments, which were shared in greater detail in Chapter Four, I extracted from the collected data that living in a racially and economically segregated neighborhood or town was something that was construed as normal for most of the women in this study. These neighborhoods and towns, which in reality are microcosms of society at large, have helped to shift the orientation and expectation of these women to one of acceptance of and comfort with the racial segregation that was experienced in their towns and neighborhoods. Based on their shared comments, their experiences of growing up in and interacting within communities that were racially and economically segregated left these interviewees with a sense of Whiteness from a different perspective.

Jemina lent further credence to the whole idea of neighborhood racial separation as she described the neighborhood of her childhood. When recalling her neighborhood, Jemina stated, “There are only a few African-American families in our neighborhood.” The fact that there was very obvious and blatant racial separation was not lost on Jemina,
The whole one-side of our town is African-American...

It’s kind of separated, more than you would think it would be, but it’s the good ole’ boys back home.

Again, as yet another White woman describes her neighborhood, Jemina talks from a sense of normalcy. Her neighborhood, even with its good ole’ boys on one side of the town and Blacks on the other is seen as acceptable and not outside the realm of socially accepted norms.

Further expanding on this idea of separation, Kathy indicated that her neighborhood, as well as her town was racially and economically segregated. Kathy relayed, “I grew up on a street that was called a historical street, so the houses were real nice, and the neighborhood was real nice. Behind us was kind of the rougher neighborhood.” Kathy went on to describe this “rougner” neighborhood as being the section of town that was all Black. Tara described her neighborhood as, “More or less segregated.” She did have Indian neighbors, but her neighborhood like many of the other women in the study was described as, “middle to upper class.”

According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), an initial step in becoming socio-culturally conscious is to learn that differences in social location are not neutral.
Thus in the mind of the White female who lives in the racially segregated neighborhood, this truly is normal and is in no way “wrong.” They do not have to think about who does not live in the neighborhood; their focus is more on who does live in the neighborhood. Kelsey shared the following as it relates to what is considered normal by people in her immediate family,

Most of the family is, all of them are, the same class, similar. They live in similar neighborhoods and obviously similar backgrounds. But with that being the case, it has kept things normal, because normal would be what was seen all the time by me.

The revelations and comments by these White female preservice teachers in this study may help clarify why living in racially or economically segregated neighborhoods is not something that is considered troubling, odd, or unusual for these White females. A lack of cultural and economic integration within their neighborhoods has helped produce a somewhat closed society for these future White teachers.

The first person I ever knew that was Black...

As the experiences of the interviewees were probed deeper, other issues surfaced. It was almost impossible not to notice that a vast majority of the women had formed and
nurtured friendships, in their community settings as well as in their educational settings which were almost totally void of racial diversity. In addition to this racial void, is the very fact that the impact of race begins early. Given that many of the ladies in this study grew up in segregated communities, churches, and in some cases public schools, they had limited opportunities to develop culturally different friendships. Kathy, who had established friendships with Black friends in the third grade, felt a sense of betrayal in her relationships with the Black friends, as they all grew up and went on to high school. The friendships which were once established became extremely strained and eventually ceased to exist as she, along with her former Black friends, became very much aware of being treated differently because of their racial background.

Kelsey had this to say about her friendships with Black students in her high school,

School friends didn’t really matter because there was always a difference between school friends and friends that you called all the time. Most of them that I actually associated with outside of school were White, and we all kind of lived near each other.
The women in this study also shared how they had the “one” person who represented the Blacks in their school or in their personal life. For two of these women, Kelsey and Monique, these representatives of Black culture were less than positive role models. These less than stellar role models served to further deepen the perceived racial divide between the law abiding innocents and the law-breaking Black male hooligans. Kelsey shared her story of the less than positive representative from the Black culture, a Black friend from high school,

He was huge, a basketball player—a actually shot his girlfriend, and he is now in Central Prison.

For Monique it was a Black male who came to live in her community and attended her all-White high school, 

Well, he was from the city and obviously he dressed different. He also talked different; he was more like a focus for me. He was the first person I ever knew that was Black, even growing up and then he was the one we always heard about in the papers. So that’s where I always got my judgment of Black people. Like he broke into stores...
It was these two representative samples of Black culture that made an indelible impression on these two potential White teachers.

Many of the women were quick to point out that one of the reasons they selected the friends they did was because of geographical proximity of neighborhood friends, but in most cases it was simply a matter of with whom these women chose to allow into their circle of friends. Take another look at Nona, for example. Nona was the elder statesperson of the group having grown up as a child of the 1970s. As a child she could not ever remember having a Black or any other kind of minority friend. To Nona this was neither weird, strange, or unusual, it just was. Nona is a classic example of racial separation by default or “de facto,” racial separation that happens or occurs “naturally.” In her book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Tatum (1997) speaks to the issue of how students of color and their White counterparts self-separate during the school lunch hour. Says Tatum, “Walk into any mixed high school cafeteria at lunch time and you will instantly notice that in the sea of adolescent faces, there is an identifiable group of Black students sitting together. Conversely, it could be pointed out that there are
many groups of White students sitting together as well, though people rarely comment about that” (p. 52).

Kelsey shared that although she had a “few” Black friends, some people that she knew didn’t have any. Kelsey did go on to explain that although she did have a few Black friends, actually having them come over to her house was a different matter. Not many of them did that at all. Whereas Kelsey stated that neither she nor her mom had a problem with inviting Blacks to her house, her father, who was raised to be very prejudiced, had a major problem with it. Kelsey, based on her statements has begun to form some ideas, thoughts, and impressions about who her friends should be, based in part on their cultural or racial origin.

Jeri was yet another prospective White teacher who had very few meaningful, authentic relationships with people who were culturally or racially different. Jeri, during her high school years, had a few friends who were Native American, but had only one Black friend the entire 4 years of high school. Her situation did not improve very much once she arrived on the campus of Deep South College; consequently she stated that she was, “disappointed by the lack of diversity.”

Kathy also recalled her friendships both in school and out of school and how they radically changed as she and her
Black friends progressed from elementary school to high school. Her Black friends in particular, because of the way others in the community perceived them, began to change. Says Kathy,

I hung out with everybody, but when I got into high school, some of my relationships got better with Blacks, some of them got worse. A lot of them [Blacks] felt a lot of things being said about them, and being looked weird around town—people looking at them different and being treated different, and discriminated against. So a lot of them [Blacks] got the attitude of being defensive with everything and assuming everybody was looking at them that way, whether they were or not.

Tatum (1997) talks about this phenomenon. She surmises that Black youths began to think about themselves in terms of race because that is how the rest of the world thinks of them. Says Tatum, “Our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those around us, and when young Black men and women enter adolescence, the racial content of those messages intensifies” (p. 54). It is this newfound self-awareness, both on the parts of Blacks and Whites, that starts to open up a chasm of racial separation that is truly hard to
ever bridge. In Kathy’s world, friendships with Blacks was not something that was discouraged by her parents, as a matter of fact they were very receptive, however, Kathy was very quick to point out that if any of those friendships with a Black male were to ever evolve into something more serious it would not go over very well with her parents.

Dara shared the same sentiments in regards to any potential relationships that she may have had with a Black male. She did not feel that her parents would have viewed such a relationship favorably. Like Dara, Jemina acknowledged that her parents would not be very accepting of any type of relationship between herself and a Black man. This thought process on the part of the parents of these women actually have a historical basis.

As early as their preschool years, children are exposed to misinformation about people different from ourselves. Tatum (1997) writes that most of the early information we receive about “others”—people racially, religiously, or socioeconomically different from ourselves—does not come as the result of firsthand experience. The secondhand information we do receive has often been distorted, shaped by cultural stereotypes and left incomplete. It is this distortion, of information that often leads to a continued perpetuation of
less than favorable stereotypes and feeling of dislike, and ill will towards people from cultural backgrounds different from our own.

**Summary of Racial Separation**

As the perceptions of the White preservice teachers were analyzed to unveil their racial experiences, several key components were identified. First, although it may not have been a factor that was initially accounted, many of these women have grown up in neighborhoods that were exclusive of cultural minorities. Their neighborhoods, churches, and schools were in many cases almost completely devoid of racial interaction. In addition, this racial separation is viewed by the women as normative, and although not something that these women actively sought or nurtured, it clearly became a condition which they came to accept—as it was thrust upon them.

Many of the women lived in predominantly White neighborhoods that were by most economic standards extremely nice (expensive). Meanwhile, just blocks away were the Black side of town or the “projects.” In some cases the women in this study were even warned against venturing into the areas alone or after dark as it could put them in danger. Kelsey
explained, “You went from a section of town that was all White, to a section of town that was all Black. She expressed that the Black or rough side of town was where “all our shooting and stuff happened.” In her own mind Kelsey had begun to associate shootings and “stuff” with Blacks. It was these types of associations that helped to shape Kelsey’s “realities” of cultural minorities, especially Blacks. Kelsey was not alone in her formation of negative racial attitudes based on observations and limited interactions with a minority group. It is these realities that these White teachers carry with them into the classroom.

Finally, when the issue of interracial dating came up some of the women were unequivocal about the reactions of their parents and other relatives to such relationships. Such relationships were strictly taboo. It was okay to have friendships with Black men, but parents strictly frowned upon dating or any type of romantic relationship. Few of the women were willing to go against the wishes of their parents when it came to this issue.

Racial/Cultural Identification
I further examined the White preservice teachers’ comments regarding other racial experiences. In examining those
comments, conversation surfaced suggesting issues of racial identification and privilege. At times, some of the interviewees shared that they felt the impact was severe enough to affect how they viewed themselves and others, particularly racial and cultural minorities. There are also occasions when individuals chose, in order to keep the peace, to ignore situations or people who may have presented information or ideas contrary to recently gained cultural awareness or knowledge. The experiences of racial identification of the interviewees varied from minimal to unforgettable. They are presented in the following section.

**Emergent Themes**

*I just don’t think about this stuff*

As the experiences of the interviewees were further explored regarding racial identification, the data revealed that Kelsey self-identified herself as, “just White.” Is White a race? According to Carter (1997) the answer is yes. Carter states that, “race is not primarily determined by biology, although skin color is a marker for race” (p. 206). In this country, race is a political and social reality; it is hard to escape it. Decisions about whom to marry and date, where to live, where to go to school, what is taught, how to move about
in one’s community and surrounding area, where to shop, for whom to vote, and occupation to pursue are all consciously or unconsciously influenced by racial considerations.

Kelsey could not ever remember having to really think about her racial identification before. This whole issue of racial self-identification along with other issues of race had never been an issue of major concern for Kelsey. She shared that her racial identification had never been questioned. She replied, “Nobody has ever presented it to me in a different way, it is just, you know…it is there. I never, had to think about my race.” Although she indicated that her family never really discussed this particular area of their lives, Kelsey continued on to share that most of her relatives lived in very similarly racially segregated neighborhoods and most of them had similar social backgrounds. This pattern, according to Kelsey kept things “normal.” To Kelsey, normal meant consistent, “the same types of people marrying the same types of people.” Kelsey’s racial and socioeconomic life was one of status quo.

There is a lot of silence about race in White communities, and as a consequence Whites tend to think of racial identity as something that other people have, not something that is salient for them (Tatum, 1997). Both Nona
and Jeri had very similar views of their racial identification. For both of these ladies racial self-identification was not a subject that they had been challenged to contemplate. For Jeri, race had never been a focus of hers. “I just don’t think about this stuff. Not really. I don’t focus on... well this is the group that I identify with—like solely this one group.” Nona expressed the same sentiment, this subject was one that she had just never thought or had to think about. Tatum (1997) helps to explain the thought process of these women when she states, “Because they represent the societal norm, Whites can easily reach adulthood without thinking much about their racial group” (p. 93).

Tara shared that one of the most influential persons in her life, as it related to her racial development was her grandmother. Stated Tara,

I recall that my grandmother had found out that there was somebody in our fourth grade textbook that we’re related to; somehow she got us all a copy of the textbook. I mean she’s real into that. I think that has played a part, as I get older, in understanding the importance of it.

Through probing, I was able to elicit more detail from Tara in regards to her grandmothers’ effort to keep alive
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their family history. Tara’s grandmother found it extremely important that the family knew its root, its historical grounding. She, the grandmother, was bound and determined that their history would not be lost or forgotten because knowledge of family history was a sense of pride for the family, especially for this grandmother. Ironically, although Tara was empowered to discover and nurture her own sense of cultural history, she knew very little about the culture or cultural history of minority groups with which she has interacted.

This cultural/racial influence may not always take on a positive tone. Several of the women in this study were able to relate stories of older relatives who either held or verbalized racist points of view. In some cases these women did not feel comfortable addressing this issue with the relative and in some cases even defended them. Kelsey’s father, according to Kelsey, was a racist. Not so much in what he did, but in the things he said: comments, phrases, and slang terms that were very racist. But since he works in industry, a working class man, Kelsey felt that in some ways his attitudes were excusable. Said Kelsey, “It is probably just stereotypes and slang and things like that, and never really being around them [Blacks] enough to learn that those aren’t true.”
Nona, by her own assessment, could never fully understand the reasoning and thought processes behind her father’s objections to her hugging the Black maid at their house. This inner conflict that was experienced between wanting to hug her Black friend and not wanting to disobey her father left her feeling very confused. Helms (1990) described what was happening to Nona in these terms,

In a race-conscious society, racial group membership has psychological implications. The messages we receive about assumed superiority or inferiority shape our perceptions of reality and influence our interactions with others (p. 94).

Frankenberg (1993) in her study of White women and their experiences and understanding of race and racism, shares a story in which one of her participants explains how her uncle rejected her protests of his remarks about a Black person whom she and her uncle encountered on an afternoon stroll. The fact that this incident lingers in the woman’s memory as a significant event in her understanding of the issue of race and racism is noteworthy. During the time of her incident with the Black nanny, Nona’s interaction went against the norms that were being established by her father. So, in order to maintain her sense of loyalty, and respect for her father,
Nona did not hug her Black nanny in the presence of her father. However, Nona neither adopted nor shared the racial superiority viewpoint of her father. Although her experience with the Black nanny happened several decades ago, it is something that made a profound impact on how she viewed the world as a White female. She explained that for her the entire situation was just so very odd. Nona, who never truly understood why her father reacted as he did, ultimately decided that his reaction was just a part of him that she just did not understand. Lisa’s racial orientation was very similar to her peers who participated in this study. She reported that no one had really helped to shape her racial view of self. Lisa felt totally comfortable with the fact that she felt very responsible for her own sense of racial development. Her own self-analysis depicted her as self-sufficient and non-reliant upon others to define who she is. Even though she admitted that no one had ever taught her, “You’re White,” she did feel a sense of who she was as a White person. However, she did feel as though this was something that she never really had to ever think about.

Kathy felt very strongly that people should not prejudge her based on a box that she checks off to indicate her race. This “forced” identification was
something Kathy felt was an intrusion, at the very least. This is particularly telling because for years Blacks and other minorities have had to check the box in regards to their racial orientation.

Kathy felt that she should not have to give this racial identification information to people who did not even know her. As a result of this newfound attitude, this White female had begun to check off “other” on her racial box. This in essence has given her a sense of power over those who would force her to racially identify herself. Kathy’s attitude is interesting in the sense that she has chosen to identify herself as something other than White.

White privilege?

“I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in on each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (McIntosh, 1998, p.1). This statement by Peggy McIntosh ushered into existence the discussion of White privilege. It would appear that the women in this study have all grown up in a society where White privilege is prevalent. This snapshot of the White preservice teachers’ personal, social, and educational experiences identified, in varying degrees, that these women did grow up in the privileged segment of society
describe by McIntosh. This privilege touched on a few areas of life: where they lived, friendships, educational experiences, reactions and attitudes towards members of cultural minority groups.

As she thought back on her early years Nona was able to acknowledge recalling that even in a diverse high school situation like the one she attended, during her last 2 years of high school she did not see much of a change in regards to the racial makeup of her academic classes. She shared, "My classes didn’t change that much. I mean, physical education did, but my calculus didn’t."

Nona noticed that her academic classes were very White, while her nonacademic classes were very segregated. This segregation was yet another illustration of the White privilege that was being enjoyed. Nona had spent some time thinking about how race and issues of race have had an impact on how she views others. Since she is older than any of the other women in the study, she has had some racially charged situations that they may not have.

I still remember being in downtown Sedona when there were separate fountains. I ran to a water fountain and my mom said—and people looked at me weirdly—and she said, “Nona you can’t use that one.” Then she
said, “It’s not for you.” I said, “Well why not?” I mean seriously, and she had to say, “Nona, just come use this one.”

It has been real life cultural conflicts like this one that have helped Nona question some of the opportunities that she has had as well as helping her to clearly see inequitable treatment of others. However, with that being said, Nona did feel that she had an advantage over many of the younger women in this study because of her age. Because of her age and the time period that she had grown up in, Nona was able to have some racial and cultural experiences that while not necessarily positive were instrumental in helping her to see some special benefits afforded to her because of her race.

Kathy too felt challenged by what was not immediately recognized as a racial privilege. She shared a recollection about a movie she had seen in one of her classes at Deep South.

We watched a lot of movies. But this particular one had a great, great impact on me, and I just ended up crying in parts of it, with the way the people were treated. They were scared to ask for better materials for their schools. They were content with what they had, because it was better than what they
did have. That killed me because if there’s a school down the road that has these great buildings and these great materials, why are these Black kids getting their leftovers? I just wanted to say, “These are kids!” You know, the parents might be to a certain extent where you can’t change them or their situation, but the kids... I don’t know, my heart just goes out to the kids. I would do anything for the children, but to see them not having the same materials, having lesser materials, only being able to go to school for half a year or a few months... for nothing they’d done, nothing they can do and their parents will not stand up for them because they’re scared. That just killed me. It also made me realize how fortunate I was. I just wanted to do something.

These feelings that were felt by Kathy were really never felt prior to viewing this movie, as a college senior. Kathy’s own personal life experiences, from a position of privilege, had never led her to experience such emotions either directly or vicariously though others.

Through this film, Kathy sensed her privilege but felt powerless to do anything about it. As she stated, the main
source of her anxiety was the fact that the children were being treated unfairly. Factored into the whole situation was the fact that Kathy felt the parents, for whatever reason, did not feel empowered to do anything about their situation. However, for Kathy this was a film, a brief snapshot into the lives of others. The situation that she viewed was one that she had personally never experienced and in all likelihood never will. Although she identified with their struggle it was not hers. Lisa Delpit (1995) further suggested the following,

The worldview of many in our society exist in protected cocoons. These individuals have never had to make an adjustment from home life to public life, as their public lives and the institutions they have encountered merely reflect a “reality” these individuals have been schooled in since birth. (p. 39)

It should be noted that based on the statements of the interviewees, there was at the very most a mild sense of being part of a privileged society. This point was brought home to me in a 1994 study conducted by a Mount Holyoke graduate student, Phyllis Wentworth (1994). Wentworth interviewed a group of female college students, who were both older than their peers and the first members of their families to attend
college, about the pathways that led them there. All of them were White and from working-class families. These were women were expected to graduate from high school and get married or get a job. In this study, many of them repeatedly told “good luck” stories: stories of apartments obtained without a deposit, good jobs offered without experience or extensive reference checks, encouragement provided by willing mentors. Even though these women acknowledged their good fortune, none of them discussed their Whiteness. They had not even considered the possibility that being White had worked in their favor, that being White had served to give them the “benefit of the doubt” at critical junctures. This study clearly showed that even under difficult circumstances, White privilege still operated.

On a very basic level many of the interviewees were able to see racial differences and discrepancies in certain situations. But for the most part the privilege that was experienced was scarcely noticed by these White teachers.

Chrissy spoke in great detail about the work that she and her church does for the homeless in her community. Many of the people that she has had an opportunity to help are Black. When asked if any of these inner-city people have ever come to visit or worship in her church she very replied no that none
ever had. She shared that she felt they would feel uncomfortable there since the church was predominantly White and very conservative. Although they had a separate service on Thursdays, the Sunday service was exclusively White.

A very common and recurring theme that emerged in this section was an affirmation of the effect that privilege has had on the lives of the women who took part in this study. Every single woman has enjoyed the benefits of privilege in some shape, form, or fashion. Yet, for all of them this was a sort of invisible privilege, “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day” (McIntosh, 1998, p.1). Kelsey’s comments summed up the feelings of the interviewees stating ‘I’ve never, ever really had to think about race…It is just, there.’

Privilege permeates our entire societal structure. Naidoo (1992) suggests:

White racism, a by-product of white privilege, will affect the White teacher who perceives racism as only at the obvious personal or behavioral level. The White teacher will not be able to take students very far. A teacher who has not begun to examine how living in a society culturally seeped in racism for centuries has infiltrated their own substratum of
beliefs, assumptions, perceptions and values, will not be in a position to help her students engage in that difficult and often uncomfortable task. (p. 147)

Summary of Racial/Cultural Identity

As the perceptions of the White preservice teachers were analyzed to unveil their experiences, attitudes, and knowledge about Blacks and their culture, several key components were identified. First, for most of these White women the concept and idea of racial self-identification was a concept that was not seriously contemplated or discussed. Through their observations of the world around them, many of the White women in this study have seen the experiences of the “other” as being somewhat abnormal. For if their own worlds were the norm, the worlds of the minorities that either observed from a distance or had had limited contact with, were in someway wrong. Normalcy to these women can be described in one word: White.

Black Culture

Our perception of others is a powerful concept. How the interviewees visualized Blacks is an important factor in how they have come, perhaps, to racially conceptualize themselves.
How individuals perceive themselves often affects how they react and respond to people or incidents around them. I further examined the White preservice teachers’ comments regarding their perception of Black culture. In examining those comments, conversation surfaced suggesting some common misconceptions, ideas, and stereotypical beliefs that were held by this group of White preservice teachers.

Emergent Themes

You don’t shout Amen!

As the experiences of the interviewees were further explored regarding White preservice teachers’ knowledge of Black culture, the data revealed that most of the women in this study possessed what they felt was at least a rudimentary knowledge of Black culture. Monique, more than any of the other women, felt that she had a very limited knowledge of Black culture. This was without a doubt due to her very limited racial and cultural exposure and experiences. That being said, Monique did acknowledge that she had a lot to learn and was more than willing to do so. A big part of Monique’s limited knowledge about Blacks and their culture came from a young Black man who was the only Black person in her high school. He stayed in trouble with the law. It was
this person who helped shape Monique’s perception of Blacks and their culture. She replied,

I didn’t know but one Black person in my first 12 years in school, and he ended up being a thug, and then I was at my other college for 3 years and I was really close with, like four Black people, and then I had my two student teaching experiences in all-Black neighborhoods. As you can see, my relationships with Black people have been very limited, and not only that, the first Black person that I ever really met did not make a very good lasting impression.

Chrissy shared a different perspective of how Black culture may be perceived by a White person. Chrissy’s perception of Black culture was that it was different, different foods, different music, different styles. Chrissy also very quickly discovered that there was a difference in the worship styles of Black and Whites. She noticed that White worshippers were not as vocal in their worship as the Blacks. She noted, “In the White church you don’t shout ‘Amen!’ You don’t get up, and clap your hands, and sing, and raise your hands up.” Chrissy also noted the difference in the length of service between the two races. In the White church the
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preacher preaches for 30 minutes and that is it, whereas in
the Black church service can easily go on for 2 or 3 hours.

Chrissy also noted that most of the overall differences
between the two cultures were really just a matter of personal
preferences and choice. She indicated that generally speaking
there are just some things that are commonly viewed as Black
“favorites” just as there are some things that are considered
White “favorites.” “It really just boils down to a matter of
choice,” said Chrissy. It is these issues of choice and
personal preferences that that truly makes a difference in
Chrissy’s world. As a White woman she chooses to attend an
all-white church where it is not common for the members to
shout “Amen.” Not shouting out loud in church is a personal as
well as cultural choice that not only Chrissy, but many of the
other women in the study have made.

Jemina’s assessment of Black culture was replete with
what some Blacks may call negative stereotypes. Jemina shared
comments about Blacks not always having a full family. She was
quick to qualify many of her statements with the disclaimer,
“I’m not saying everybody, but a lot of them.” There were also
statements about the difference in Black speech, sometimes
more commonly called Ebonics. Jemina did note that she felt
very few people who are speaking English are actually speaking
“real” English. Jemina, like other women in this study, acknowledged that much of what she knows or thinks she knows about Black culture has not come through direct experiences or authentic relationships but through casual observations, very limited personal experiences, and the media. Jemina shared that she was not really sure the views that she had come to believe about Blacks was true. However, she did believe that with more authentic experiences, her views could easily change.

Tara was one who did speak about personal experiences as being the biggest way that she learned about Black culture. She also pointed out that she had been a very conscientious observer, but by far her knowledge of Black culture was by interacting within the community.

Examination of Nona’s experiences and perceptions of Black culture revealed that although she had very few authentic relationships with Blacks, she displayed a certain amount of empathy for the various struggles Blacks have had in their fight for civil rights. Nona grew up during the time of the civil rights movement. She was able to experience and view first hand the very blatant racial discrimination that was rampant in our country during the late 1960s, early 1970s.
I’ve actually seen some of that stupidity. Since I was there to see much of that stuff first hand I have a very different perspective than some of the younger women that I know. Even my own children have no clear understanding of just how bad it was back then. I regret that any of that could happen to anybody—sadness and just horror basically. A total not understanding of how people can be led to do things that are so hurtful to another group of people. To this day I still don’t understand.

Nona’s cultural world view has definitely been shaped by her own personal life experiences. Her experiences have had a direct impact on her decision to become an elementary school teacher. “Because I plan to teach, I want to give the best experience that I can to children wherever they’re coming from—that’s what I try to take to heart: anything that can help me do that better.”

Lisa was able to enhance her knowledge of Black culture through an authentic relationship with her college roommate at Deep South College. Prior to rooming with Desiré, Lisa had never really had an authentic relationship with a Black person. It was through her relationship with Desiré that Lisa was able to form a clearer understanding of Black people. As
she and her roommate got to know one another they began to
discover many of the common stereotypes and misconceptions
that they held about the other cultural group were proven to
be totally inaccurate and untrue. Lisa acknowledged, “Had it
not been for this relationship, most of my misconceptions
about Blacks probably would not have changed.”

Monique articulated her belief of how her authentic
relationships with four Black people may have enhanced her
personal knowledge of another ethnicity. Monique said, “You
see it [race] from a different perspective. I think I did
learn more now, because I can see your side. Until I saw that
side, I only knew my side. My White side. I didn’t think there
was much racism or discrimination, and I just didn’t know it
until now.”

**Would you date a Black guy?**

Several of the women in this study, broached the subject
of interracial relationships. For most of them thoughts of
what the family, and others, would say, weighed heavily in
their thought processes as it related to their potential
desire to date someone outside of their race. Their feelings
about this separation possibly have roots in fairly recent
history. As late as the 1960s some judges and legislators
subscribed to the notion of natural separation between the
races. For example, in a 1965 opinion, quoted by the Supreme Court in *Loving v. Virginia*, Circuit Court Judge Leon Bazile defended Virginia’s anti-miscegenation law as necessary to maintain racial purity:

> Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix. (Roberts, 1997, p. 186)

Jemina was very candid when she discussed this issue. On the surface she felt that her parents would say they didn’t have a problem with her dating interracially (especially a Black man) but she then went on to say that in reality they probably would have a problem with it. Jemina stated, “My dad still has friends that are African-American. Actually he has a best friend, my Uncle Speedy. He is Hispanic. If it was just to be a friendship that is fine. If we decide to date anybody outside of our race... I don’t think they would stop us, but I know they would say something.”
Jeri shared how her limited knowledge of Black culture and the whole notion of racism have led to some uncomfortable situations at Deep South College.

When I came here I really didn’t know that racism was such a big issue still. I guess because I wasn’t exposed to it because my friends in high school—maybe it was because they weren’t exposed to it so we never talked about it really. I just assumed that everything was fine. It wasn’t such a big issue until I came here. I remember our freshman year, we had essay groups. It’s like a group of six girls and an advisor and a student advisor to help with the group. The purpose of the group is to help you begin new friendships because you have like a zillion meetings freshman year, freshman orientation. I think we were just walking around Green Street, walking up to the shops or something and I don’t know, somebody just brought it up. “Would you date a Black guy?” I don’t know how it was brought up or why it was brought up. Everybody was like, “No” and I was like “Yeah” and they were like, “My dad would kill me; I would never be able to do that.” That’s when I was like, “Oh.”
Kelsey’s response only validated the responses of the other women in the study. She shared the following,

I would probably not get a good reaction if I brought home a Black man, especially from my Dad. I had a distant cousin do that and the whole family just freaked. But that was her marriage. We really didn’t know her, but I know that her family… She had to move out and all that kind of stuff. It wasn’t a good thing. My grandparents, that would not be a good thing just because of that generation, I think on both sides, didn’t really have anything to do with one another, just because that’s how they were raised. As for my parents, I think it would be uncomfortable for my mom, but not something that would be forbidden. But for my dad it would definitely not be a good thing.

Kathy’s story looks and sounds the same as the others, “If I were to bring a Black person home as, like a date, I don’t think that would go over well, but as friends, they really wouldn’t care. I had a lot of close Black friends. Dara echoed the almost exact same sentiments. Her parents too did not have a problem with their daughter having friendships with Black men, but relationship beyond friendships was totally out
of the question. The women in this study, and their extended families, were consistent with Tatum’s (1997) conclusion that there is a hierarchy at work in this country. Dominant groups (Whites) set the parameters within which the subordinates (Blacks) operate. The dominant group holds the power and authority in society relative to the subordinates and determines how that power and authority may be acceptably used. Whether it is reflected in determining who get the best jobs, whose history will be taught in school, or whose relationships will be validated by society, the dominant group has the greatest influence in determining the structure of the society (Tatum, 1997). The dominant group is seen as the norm for humanity. It is this dominant group that even sets the rules of engagement for interracial dating. As seen in this study, the dominant (White) group has determined that a White woman dating a Black man is taboo and not something to be considered as a “normal” relationship.

It is this cultural reality that these White women will also bring to their respective classrooms. None of these women have been explicitly taught to dislike, abuse, or treat Blacks in a discriminatory manner. However, there is a strong sense that these women may feel hampered in building relationships with Black men because of the social realities that they grew
up with. These realities, which discouraged intimate relationships with Black men, help to bring to light a very subtle prejudice that exists in many of our schools. Although these White women are empowered to teach little Black boys there is still a very strong cultural divide that on a certain level could inhibit development of close teacher-student relationships.

Summary of Black Culture

One important aspect that surfaced over the course of this research was the need for authentic, personal relationships between Whites and Blacks. Many of the White preservice teachers in this study expressed a lack of knowledge about the “Other” based in part on a lack of relationship. Much of the information these women had gained about Blacks came from other sources, such as friends, family, and the media. In addition, some of the information that has been received has helped to reinforce and strengthen negative stereotypes and misconceptions. Although some of the women have had limited authentic relationships, almost all were able, on some level, to empathize and sympathize with issues of racism and discrimination.
Interracial relationships also surfaced as a reoccurring theme. Again, one of the main influencing factors in this area was family. These women were heavily influenced by their immediate family in the area of interracial dating and relationships. If mom or dad had issues or concerns about interracial dating, then so, too, did the White preservice teacher. Interestingly enough, it was okay for these women to have casual friendships with Black men, but the moment it was thought to be more or had the potential to be more it was nipped in the bud. As we turn to the classrooms that these women will be teaching in, it is important to realize that it is no secret that family has played a part in helping shape those cultural world views. For the White preservice teacher a growing part of those cultural world views is centered on those daily interactions with those children from cultural backgrounds that are totally different from their own, in particular, the one group that consistently struggles in classrooms across the country, Black males. The women in this study seemed to think that cultural experiences have helped to shape their views of this group in both negative and positive aspects.
Preparation for Diversity

I further examined the White preservice teachers’ comments regarding their perceived readiness to effectively teach children from culturally diverse backgrounds, in particular Black children. In addition I examined comments relating to perceived readiness to successfully interact with and communicate with the parents of those same children. In examining those comments, some of the interviewees shared they felt their perceived readiness in both areas was directly impacted by the preparation received in their teacher education preparation programs. The White preservice teachers’ perceived efficacy and the preparation and experiences that have attributed to their perceived efficacy varied from White teacher to White teacher.

Emergent Themes

Nothing but old, upper class, White men

As the experiences of the interviewees were further explored regarding perceived readiness to effectively teach culturally different children, the data revealed that many of the White preservice teachers felt ill equipped to reach the needs of their future classroom charges. Pang and Sablan (1998) report that teacher efficacy has been found to be a
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A multidimensional construct that includes how confident teachers view their personal abilities to be effective teachers and their expectations about the influence of teaching on student learning. Of the 10 White preservice teachers who participated in this study, only four felt positive about the professional training they had received in preparation for dealing with diverse student populations. Tara, Nona, Lisa, and Dara all felt adequately prepared. Tara, who is majoring in art with a teaching certification, spoke highly of the Art Department head. This person was described as having been very instrumental in providing various cross-cultural and cross-categorical opportunities for students in that department. Tara went on to say, “I don’t feel that I would be in a situation that I wasn’t at least a fraction prepared for. I’m very fortunate because I realize that does not happen for all [pause] education majors. They don’t have the benefit of doing all that.”

Nona chose not to concentrate on the cultural packages that her children would be bringing to the classroom, but rather on their developmental stages and academic ability. She felt that these particular attributes were of more importance than their cultural or racial makeup. Both Lisa and Dara expressed high levels of confidence in their potential ability
to reach their culturally different children. Their feelings support a study by Pang and Sablan (1998) that found preservice teachers are more positive about their ability to reach Black children than inservice teachers.

One critical dimension that helps to inform this discussion on perceived teacher efficacy is race. Kelsey shared that she would hope that the education department would help prepare the White preservice teachers for diversity, however she then proceeded to say, “The general education here doesn’t prepare you for anything but old, White, upper-class men. Because that is who wrote the history, you know? That’s what you’re being prepared for.” Kelsey continued on by stating,

Since I have not been through the whole program at Deep South I can’t say with absolute certainty that I would not be prepared for diversity but, if you get stuck in a predominantly White school doing your student teaching, no, you wouldn’t be prepared. Not at all, I don’t think so. You may have 20 kids in your class that are White and three or four that are Black. That doesn’t help you at all to understand a person from another race or ethnic group, or to open up White students’ minds.
Kelsey went on to give a pretty critical critique of the lack of diversity at Deep South College and the possible negative effect it could have on White teacher efficacy.

I look at this all-White school. I don’t think it is possible to provide many diversity opportunities here. I don’t think anybody can say that...If you went to an all-Black school for so long, for 4 years, and then you walked into an all-White, or really diverse-obviously probably that would be White—I don’t know if you would feel prepared. So when I say I’m going to work with minorities, and I probably will if I do what I want to ultimately want to, I can prepare myself the best that I can. But I don’t depend on the teachers here at Deep South College. No. Most of them are White teachers, too, with White points of view, White cultures. Those are different from Hispanic, Asian, and African American. So no, I don’t think this college has prepared me for what I may face.

Kelsey expressed these thoughts very matter of fact, as if what she experienced was what she expected.
Monique and Jemina both expressed a deep sense of disappointment in the quality and types of cultural educational experiences offered at Deep South College.

Chrissy shared that she felt that she had benefited very little from the diversity classes that she had received at Deep South College. Part of the feeling comes from the fact that Chrissy felt she did not really have an area that she had a “hang-up” with. In her mind people with racial or diversity hang-ups were in more need of those types of classes than she was. Chrissy didn’t feel as if she really learned anything from any of the diversity classes that she has had. She stated,

I don’t know that I learned anything from them [diversity classes] really. I don’t know if I will in future classes either. I’m in Exceptional Psychology right now, and that is mostly about dealing with kids who are different. Kids with disabilities and things like that. That class is incredible, and it teaches you basically that positive reinforcement is so important. Instead of saying, “Don’t do that, I’m going to give you this.” I think that is important when you are dealing with
kids of all types. I don’t know if I was any better or less prepared because I was a Deep South student.

In a Pang and Sablan study, (1998), a large number of teachers reported that they did not feel they could effectively teach Black students.

Forty-one percent did not disagree with a statement that indicated that their class had little influence on African American students when compared to the influence of their homes; 65% did not disagree with the statement that even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach African American youth. A strong underlying belief seems to prevail that the African American community is not supportive of education (p. 53).

Being colorblind allows White people to both ignore the benefits of Whiteness and dismiss the experiences of people of color. By minimizing the importance of their students’ skin color, Chrissy has accepted the fallacy that “kids are just kids.” Lisa Delpit (1995) had this to say about the issue of minority child invisibility, “Even with well-intentioned educators, not only our children’s legacies but our children themselves can become invisible” (p. 177). Delpit goes on to state, “Many of the teachers we educate, and indeed their
teacher educators, believe that to acknowledge a child’s color is to insult him or her.”

In her book *White Teacher* (1989) Vivian Paley openly discusses the problems inherent in the statement that many teachers—well intentioned teachers—utter, “There is no color difference in my classroom. All children look alike to me” (p. 12). The problem with statements such as this is that they have the unintended effect of minimizing the sense of culture that racial minorities bring to the classroom. McCain and Salas (2001) state, “Generally speaking, teacher education programs have prepared beginning teachers to work under the axiom of a Eurocentric dogma that negates, gives lip service to, or abuses the notion of diversity in today’s classrooms” (p. 301). It appears that many of the women in this study subscribe to this school of thought. Thus it becomes imperative that many of the educational experiences these White perspective teachers have, should afford them with opportunities to see the worth and importance of recognizing and valuing the racial diversity that will be represented in their classrooms.

*It’s kind of scary*

Just as the experiences of the interviewees were further explored regarding perceived readiness to effectively teach
culturally different children, so too were their experiences explored regarding their perceived readiness to effectively communicate with and interact with the parents of these children. The majority of the interviewees indicated that they did not feel that their college teacher preparatory program had done an adequate job of preparing them to work with and relate to minority parents. Jeri expressed feeling of major reservations in this area.

It’s kind of scary because you think about what you’re going to do in that first situation when you have no clue how to handle yourself or how to deal with it. It might turn some people off from teaching, because I don’t know the rate of teachers who quit after the first year—it’s really high. Maybe if we had training in the area of parent diversity it wouldn’t be so high. Because it’s just going to be trial and error to see how to go about it. I have no experience right now, so maybe I’ll get some in some higher-level education courses. But right now I don’t have what it takes.

Kathy, who as a high school senior had volunteered to work in the all-Black community center, very strongly and directly expressed concerns about her perceived readiness as a
result of her educational program at Deep South. Although she felt that she was equipped with some of the necessary tools for dealing with culturally different parents, she was quick to note that she did not receive these tools through Deep South College. “I’ve interacted with Black parents many times, but on a more personal level, talking about their kids, talking about child abuse, helping them out with this or that, more at the community center-type things than anything.”

Dara was yet another White preservice teacher who expressed concern about her training to reach Black parents. Dara felt that the program at Deep South had tried to adequately prepare its future teachers but had fallen short. Dara shared the following,

I think the program here has tried to prepare us for our Black parents and students. Unfortunately, some Deep South students—they may not have looked at it that way. But one of my teachers told me that you need to be able to learn from both your kids and their parents. You need to take what they have to offer and everything that they offer. No matter what color they are, no matter how old they are, no matter what language they speak. Everyone has
something to offer, so you need to be aware of that and draw from that.

Jemina too expressed concern about her preparation. She stated that she was scared. It was her feeling that in so many of the situations she may encounter with her minority parents she may have to watch what she said. Her main concern was that she did not want to unintentionally offend someone. Although her college experience and preparation in and of itself did not scare her, it did fail to help bring Jemina to a point of comfort and efficacy as it relates to her readiness to teach cultural minority children.

It is important to remember that the teacher preparation program at Deep South College is designed to prepare professional educators to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of all children. Many of the courses that these White preservice teachers take seek to prepare them in various areas of education: reading, writing, math. Above and beyond the preparation for academic competence and efficacy is the need that new teachers have to meet the need of culturally diverse classrooms. This is a need which is explicitly stated in the new NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) standards for year 2000 and beyond. In particular the supporting explanations for Standard 3b.
states: “...Candidates plan instructional tasks and activities appropriate to the needs of students who are culturally diverse and those with exceptional learning needs in elementary schools. They are able to apply knowledge of the richness of contributions from diverse cultures to each content area studied by elementary students” (NCATE, 2000, p. 16h). This standard points directly to the need for all preservice elementary school teachers to be able to address the needs of culturally diverse learners. Any university that is NCATE accredited must have courses and programs in place that address this standard.

There were a couple of women who felt a sense of ambivalence in this area. Although Nona did not specifically address the diversity programs at Deep South she expressed a sense of readiness to deal with minority parents based on her own sense of how to deal with parents and children in general, regardless of race. “If they have their children’s best interests at heart, we’re going to be fine,” she said. Nona felt that the best way to deal with these parents was to solicit their input on the best ways to work with their children. This is something she said that she did not learn in any of her classes at Deep South. Likewise Lisa and Chrissy stated that they too felt pretty comfortable with the
diversity classes they had had thus far at Deep South. According to Lisa the only parents she would not feel totally comfortable communicating with would be her Hispanic parents. Lisa stated that this discomfort was based primarily on her inability to speak a foreign language. Otherwise she felt that she had been adequately prepared through her coursework. Chrissy felt that her background as a communication major would be the key for her in reaching cultural minority parents. She never really addressed the classes that she had to prepare her for the diversity. She did however feel very confident in her ability to reach this group of parents.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) reported that “teachers who are not familiar with their pupils (and their families) are not well positioned to represent subject matter in ways that are meaningful to them” (p. 79). They go on to say that in order to help students from diverse backgrounds build bridges between home and school, teachers need to know about the lives of the specific children they teach. If teachers do not learn about the lives of the children they teach, they lose a valuable connection to possible education gains they may be made through parent, teacher, and student connections.

In her book It Takes a Village (1996) Hillary Clinton points out that “schools are frightening places” (p. 252). She
notes that if a child’s parents have not finished school or were poor students themselves, they may be even less at ease in a school setting. Thus, it is up to the classroom teacher to help set up a situation that makes the classroom an inviting place to these marginalized parents. The problem occurs when the classroom teacher feels threatened or ill-equipped to deal with the parents of the children in their classrooms.

Summary of Preparation for Diversity

The diversity preparation, or lack thereof, that the White preservice teachers received at Deep South College has had a direct impact on the perceived readiness of those aspiring teachers. The majority of the women felt ill-equipped to effectively teach and communicate not only with cultural minority children, but most had severe reservations about their readiness to effectively communicate with the parents of these children. Women who described more real-life, authentic relationships with persons from cultural minorities, also expressed themselves as more ready to meet the challenge of diversity than those without those experiences. From these small cross-sections of White preservice teachers there emerged a full spectrum of prior cultural experiences. In many
cases these authentic life experiences have had a major impact on the way these women view cultural minorities.

Another factor that emerged is the fact that not all majors are created equal. Some majors at Deep South College did a better job of exposing students to authentic cultural experiences than others. In many cases it was these university provided experiences that served to truly educate and prepare prospective teachers for diversity. Still there were concerns. Even while feeling prepared in a broad sense of the word, there were still specific concerns that arose for some of these White preservice teachers. One of the concerns was the lack of cultural diversity at Deep South College. The second concern was the perceived lack of coursework in the education department that directly addressed areas of cultural diversity in the classroom. The final concern was a lack of coursework that directly addressed ways to effectively communicate with and collaborate with parents of culturally diverse students. Not having a clear understanding of how to work with these parents placed these women in what they considered a disadvantage before they had even officially begun their teaching careers.

The concern expressed by the majority of these White preservice interviewees appears to be a legitimate statement
of desire to learn more about other cultural minorities so that they may go into their respective classrooms feeling that they have been provided with some of the necessary tools to begin that process of recognizing the cultural diversity that comes into their classrooms. Jemina summed it up beautifully when she shared that she was scared, scared not of the children but of the parents of the children. She is scared of saying the wrong thing, of unintentionally offending. Jemina, like many of the other women, expressed disappointment that the educational program at Deep South College has not prepared her to deal with these fears, be they real or imagined. It is important to note that the statements by the women in this study are in no way to be taken as an indictment of the teacher education preparation program at Deep South College. More than anything their statements point to a larger reality, the need for all prospective teacher candidates to have authentic life experiences with people from cultures outside their own. It is this building of relationship that truly makes the difference in the perceived efficacy of classroom teachers, regardless of race.
As the interviewees shared poignant moments from their field experience at Charity Elementary School, several enlightening and defining moments were identified as noteworthy themes. First, enlightening and defining moments surfaced in this research as a common theme. I have defined enlightening and defining moments as those events (good or bad) that remain foremost in the individual’s mind or have had some significant impact on the individual, her cultural worldview, and her ability to effectively teach cultural minority children.

Emergent Themes

You gotta boyfriend yo?

The task of preparing teachers who are sensitive to and responsive to the needs of minority children is complex and demanding. This is a task that is being tackled by more and more colleges and universities in teacher education preparation programs. One way that has been suggested to accomplish this task is by having prospective teachers spend time in schools and communities to familiarize themselves with these settings. Although the women in this study were experienced students, most of these future teachers have never
had the opportunity to look at schools from a teacher’s perspective. Having an opportunity to observe activities and interactions inside multicultural classrooms could be one way for White preservice teachers to begin to envision themselves teaching and reaching multicultural students. Each of the interviewees recognized and voiced value in having spent time in a field experience at Charity Elementary School. The value of the field experience was expressed in different ways by each of the women.

Monique, who grew up in a small New York town and whose first and only Black “role model” was a juvenile delinquent, spent an extended period of time with Black children for the first time in her life. Her time with the kindergartners was an eye-opener for her. One of the facets of the dynamics of these kindergarten students was the way they communicated. Monique was totally amazed by the way this group of 5 year olds spoke to her. She shared some of the verbal interactions,

I just keep thinking about this one little boy who kept asking, “You gotta boyfriend yo?” Another thing was their accents, like, their slang terms. Not when the teacher’s around—they know how to talk to her—but when she wasn’t there or when they want to know something about you, it’s so funny. They just use a
different language. With their teacher it was more “formal” but with me it was more relaxed, calm, and just free flowing. They said whatever they wanted to and were very honest. One of them called me a scrawny, thing girl or something. They were like, “You scrawny!” Just like that. I just started laughing.

Monique had begun the process of establishing an authentic relationship with this group of Black children.

Chrissy also had an interesting moment of dialogue with one of the students in the class with whom she was able to interact. Instead of doing the reading lesson with this little girl Chrissy found herself listening to what was a pretty heart wrenching story about this little girl’s father who was in prison. This story being told by this 5 year old Black child had a profound effect on this prospective White preservice teacher. As she recalled this memory, Chrissy became very emotional and tears began to well up in her eyes. I asked her what was going through her head while this little girl was telling her this story.

It was hitting me hard. I guess I was thinking that those kids are in a rough situation. A lot of them don’t even know that because they don’t know any
different. They don’t know that there could be a mom or dad at home loving them, caring for them, helping them with schoolwork and that kind of thing. At the same time, sure, Charity is predominately Black but, there are also White kids in the same position that we don’t even think about. I think when people think about inner city they think Black poor people.

It was moments like this that reminded Chrissy of the vast cultural ocean that exists between her and some of the children she may encounter in her classroom once she becomes a teacher. Chrissy found herself looking deeply inside and contemplating how she would react if she were the classroom teacher and this child was in her class. As she thought Chrissy began to verbalize some of the thoughts running through her mind.

I just think that these kids aren’t shown love at home as much as are Whites. They have been through a lot, and they need that extra push. It’s not as much like they are doing extracurricular activities and able to know that they are successful at things. They aren’t in ballet class and know that they are the best person in the class. If they are not getting enough positive reinforcement from
somewhere, then they need it. White kids are getting that. For the most part middle class White families put their kids in every activity until they find one that they are good at and then the child sticks with that one. These kids are not getting that opportunity in the same way. I think that it was obvious they weren’t getting the love they needed.

**Good leeches**

Several of the White preservice teachers in this study shared incidents that caused them to reflect back on how they were received by the children of Charity Elementary. Kelsey, and Jemina were touched by the warmth and love that greeted them in the classrooms. Many of the women had feelings of apprehension that were grounded in their fears of possibly not being accepted by these Black children. Kelsey recalled that the children grabbed on like leeches, not badly but nevertheless grabbing on. “They met me for the first time for an hour or so, and were giving me hugs,” said Kelsey. Jemina experienced much the same. Since this was the very first time Jemina had ever found herself as a minority in any type of situation, she was uneasy at first. However she found once she got there that the kids were “just awesome.” For her, that was
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poignant, to be totally accepted by this group of Black children.

Present yourself like a scholar

Several of the women in this study found themselves captivated by the style of teaching that was going on at Charity Elementary School. Nona in particular noticed how much more direct instruction was occurring in these classrooms. She also noticed that the teachers would say things to the students like, “Present yourself like a scholar.” Students were encouraged to “Represent yourself a certain way.” It was things such as this that truly impressed these women about the school and about the way teaching and learning was approached at this school. During her stay at Charity Elementary, Nona felt totally comfortable and at ease in the classroom. She felt as if the students and teachers totally embraced her and make her feel very welcomed.

Jeri also shared her thoughts on her sudden role reversal of being a minority.

I didn’t really feel any different. I was just wondering, “what do they think of me?” Do they have a preconceived idea of what I’m going to be like? That was running through my head. But basically, I was like, “These are 5 year olds” and I would like
to teach kindergarten. But the one thing I kept wondering was whether they had any ideas about what I’m like, negative or positive.

In a very real way these ladies all sought the approval and acceptance of these children whom they really did not even know. But, it was important for them to be validated by these Black children.

Tara had a difficult time being at Charity because she was at odds with the concept of an all-Black school. “I said to myself, ‘What is this teaching children in general?’” In her mind this was the exact opposite of what schools should be like. Once she got into the classrooms she was able to see that teaching and learning was still going on, just as it would in a more traditional school. Tara, like many of the other women, found Charity, its teachers, and students to be very warm and openly inviting to her and the others. Any fears, concerns, or worries about not being accepted or viewed as being somehow different were very quickly dispelled.

**Summary of Charity Elementary School**

Another important aspect that surfaced over the course of this research was the perceived importance of opportunities for White preservice teachers to have field experiences in
which they can go into communities which are much like the ones in which they will ultimately be teaching. For almost every single woman in this study that meant going into a situation where they are the cultural minority.

Acceptance or at the very least perceived acceptance by the minority children who they are teaching was deemed extremely important. The women in this study had a true desire to want to be accepted by the Black children of Charity Elementary School. As educators, and lovers of children they all expressed concern for the educational, social, and mental health of the children of Charity. In turn they wanted the children to want them to be a part of their lives. This bonding is critical in the transmission of knowledge from one individual to another. It is this bonding that may help to bridge the cultural gaps that exist today.

Chapter Summary

The findings in this study portrayed White preservice teacher interviewees, as women who have for the most part led and lived racially segregated lives. This racial separation has permeated every aspect of their lives: educationally, socially, and geographically. No area of their lives has been left untouched by their racial heritage. In most cases this
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racial separation was not something that was actively sought but rather just happened. Sometimes this separation was cause for concern, but for most it was just a way of life.

Furthermore the interviewees revealed that prior to this research, none of them had ever really had to think about who they were racially. The issue was a non-issue. For most of their lives family, friends, and the media had helped to shape their normative view of Whiteness and what it actually means to be White. Sometimes because of the stance taken in regards to race and how some close family members and friends viewed certain issues of race and relationships, conflict did arise. In most cases when conflict did arise, most decided that the best course of action was to follow along with the mainstream and do as they did especially in terms of race relations and relationships beyond friendships.

In many subtle ways the racial separation that these women experienced affected how they reacted to racial minorities in various situations. None of these women went out of their way to befriend any of the Black students in their high schools. None of these women ever had any type of relationship with a Black male beyond the casual, “Hi, how are you” in the hallways. In at least two different cases, the interviewees reported that Black males proved to be nothing
more than common criminals. None of the White preservice teachers reported ever having any type of positive role models that were Black, male or female. It is these same women who will be teaching in American classrooms full of little Black boys, little Black girls, and other cultural minorities.

Importantly, this research documents and reveals that opportunities to allow for and encourage authentic dialogue and relationships between White preservice teachers and cultural minority students have potential for great value. This research has allowed the voices of these White preservice teachers, those who will be classroom teachers of a very Brown and Black America to rise up and be heard.
Conversation is critical, but not without self-reflection, both individually and communally. While myths help us make sense of the incomprehensible, they can also confine us, confuse us and leave us prey to historical laziness. Moreover, truth is not always discernible—and even when it is, the prism, depending on which side of the river you reside on, may create a wholly different illusion—Alex Kotlowitz, 1993 (Mazel, 1998, p. 134).

The purpose of this research was to explore the various experiences that may have an influence on the perceived readiness of White preservice teachers to successfully teach and communicate with cultural minority students. I anticipated that providing in-depth insight into the various everyday cultural life experiences of White preservice teachers would elicit informative information detailing the various cultural factors and influences that have served to help form the idea of a cultural self for these women. It was anticipated that the research results might provide real world snapshots for White females who are exploring a career in elementary or secondary education, give the interviewees in this study an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions, and contribute to the knowledge base on White preservice teachers. As a result, this research has made available many of the
activities, experiences, and thoughts of 10 White preservice teachers.

A qualitative methodology was implemented using constant comparative analysis techniques. Qualitative data were collected from which I extracted rich, thick descriptions from the interviewees in this study. The interviews with the White preservice teachers produced a large quantity of qualitative data. Member checking, using the transcribed data, was conducted to verify the accuracy of the oral interviews. Packets were assembled containing the transcribed data and submitted to the interviewees to verify accuracy, to make corrections, and to identify for deletion data presenting threats to identity exposure or tagged as much too personal. Following the final accuracy verification by the interviewees, the data were sorted, categorized, and examined for recurring themes, and analyzed for core content and meaning.

In Chapter Four, I presented the intimate and detailed thoughts of the White preservice teachers who participated in this study. Their own words, laced with rich descriptions were used to convey their interpretation of their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of race and culture to me. The statements of the interviewees began with images of each woman’s personal cultural history. Where they grew up, who
their friends were, where they went to church, and who influenced them the most as they were beginning to form ideas of their personal, cultural self were topics they shared. The interviewees went on to candidly share what they thought they knew about Black culture. Next, the interviewees discussed how they felt about the diversity training they have received to help prepare them to successfully teach cultural minorities. They concluded by sharing experiences they had at Charity Elementary School. Stories highlighting their fears, concerns, revelations, and attitude shifts were explicitly shared with me.

Common themes surfaced as an interrelated mixture of lived cultural experiences, attitudes, and perceptions occurring within the lives of the White preservice teachers. The interviewees’ interpretations of what was happening to them based on those events were explored. It is important to note that the results of this study only apply to these participants. The research data should not be generalized to all White preservice teachers collectively in any college or university teacher preparation program or in any manner other than what is described within this research.

Chapter Five, on the other hand, presented an analysis of the interview data presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five
also offered research results with supporting literature where appropriate. This final chapter presents conclusions drawn from the related themes and their implications for the White preservice teachers and their education. It concludes with recommendations for future research.

Conclusions and Implications

Several of the findings in this study focused on the cultural life experiences of the interviewees and their perception of those experiences. The experiences and perceptions of the interviewees touched on various aspects of their personal, social, and educational lives. The conclusions that follow were drawn from those comments and perceptions of important aspects of their cultural experiences. The comments of the interviewees were accepted at face value and their accuracy was not verified beyond the interviewees themselves.

**Conclusion 1.** White preservice teachers can only express their sense of cultural awareness as related to Black populations or individuals in terms of the extent or limits of their experiences. For some, the lack of contact/knowledge, reinforcement of stereotypes by significant others, generalizations from limited contact, and distant associations during childhood, adolescence and pre-adult years serve as the
set of memories that these White preservice teachers connect with their awareness of Black culture and individuals. For others personal, close relationships and acceptance by significant others serve as this set of memories associated with this awareness.

Implication 1. Conclusion one has serious implications for how we as educators teach Black children.

Through this research, I was able to establish that many of the cultural experiences of the women in this study have been nothing more than surface level, not very deep or meaningful. Several of the women in this study have been able to reach adulthood without ever having had an authentic relationship with a Black person. The White preservice teachers in this study revealed that they had very few authentic relationships of any type with Black people. In many of the cities that the interviewees lived there was a clearly defined White side of town as well as an equally defined Black side of town. These same women are now entering their preservice teaching experiences with very little concept of what it means to grow up Black or even what it means to grow up non-Black.

Five of the 10 interviewees attended schools that were racially integrated. Surprisingly the other five attended
schools that were mainly White. Fifty years after the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, which struck down racial segregation in our public schools, we still have schools that are racially segregated. Many of the women in this study shared that if you were White and attended a school that was somewhat desegregated you could still have classes where very few, if any, of your classmates would be Black. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that discussion of race as a determinant in children’s personal and academic success is still an emotionally charged and often misunderstood issue that is an impediment to effective teacher education and teaching across racial lines.

Not surprisingly 7 of the 10 interviewees had friendships during their high school years that were predominantly White. Part of this was dictated by the fact that many of their schools were racially segregated as well as their neighborhoods. It only stands to reason that simply based on proximity, the opportunities to form friendships were mainly limited to those who you lived near or went to school with. Thus, for most of these women it meant friendships with other White people. Only three of the interviewees were able to say that they had authentic friendships with someone from a cultural minority group.
The implications derived from the collected data suggest that even though there are laws that prohibit racial discrimination in housing, laws that promote racial integration in our public schools, as well as laws that make interracial marriage permissible, there still remains in this country a racial separation that permeates every aspect of our society. Thus, the state of segregation described by the research participants in this study implies that lack of preparedness for white teachers is rooted not just in their formal training but in the structure of American society. This separation begins at an early age for many Whites, as well as Blacks, and only continues to worsen as they grow older. It is this racial separation and lack of authentic relationship between Whites and Blacks that sets the stage for the many of the various racial clashes that occur, many in the arena of education.

One thing that very clearly stood out in this study was the lack of connection most of the women had to the realities of Black life. The predominantly White world that they live in, and the predominantly White college this research took place in, would logically make it difficult for the participants to grasp the lived experiences of people of color. Some of the women in this study had engaged in
volunteer opportunities that involved working with Black children. These experiences provided the participants with a glimpse of how children of color live. In addition, all the women in this study had an opportunity to have an extended interaction at an all-Black elementary school as a part of this study. These women were given an opportunity to enhance their knowledge base as it relates to children of color. Not all White preservice teachers will have these types of multicultural opportunities in their professional education programs. Yet these same teachers will need to have somehow developed the interpersonal skills, the intrapersonal skills, and the desire to effectively teach racial minority students. The teacher preparation program at Deep South University offers a wide range of educational opportunities for these White preservice teachers. The problem however, is that given their limited exposure to cultural minorities, particularly Blacks, there appears to be a need to establish a bevy of cultural educational opportunities for these women to experience prior to their employment as professional educators.

More and more as there is awareness of White identity and White culture and its intersection with Black identity and Black culture, opportunities for dialogue between the two
racial groups will become more common. As the dialogue becomes more common the knowledge base between the two races begins to expand and authentic relationships start to become the norm. Delpit (1995) had this to say on the subject, “Just as cultural groups determine how their members view the world, so they determine how the world is talked about as well” (p. 144).

This notion becomes so extremely important in the classrooms of these future teachers. As these White teachers learn more about the cultural differences their Black students bring to the educational table, there is a very real possibility many of the problems that are tied directly to issues of race, such as the achievement gap, high instances of Black males being placed in BED (Behaviorally and Emotionally Disabled) classrooms, Black students receiving out-of-school suspensions at a much higher rate than their White counterparts, may very well be eliminated. In addition Black children are sometimes penalized at school for talking loudly, because some teachers equate loudness with defiance. However, teachers fail to realize that in some cultures, including the Black culture, talking loudly is considered to be normal behavior (Thompson, 2004).
Through this study this researcher has found that many of the White preservice teachers in this study have a desire to know more about Blacks but few have been given a true opportunity to explore the general culture, attitudes, and beliefs of their Black students and families. Teachers’ beliefs about Blacks and other students have far reaching consequences. According to Thompson (2004), many Americans believe that children from non-mainstream backgrounds are innately inferior to middle-class and upper-middle class White children. Unfortunately, some teachers have the same belief. Whether this belief stems from a lack of understanding, knowledge, or authentic relationships with cultural minorities, the fact still remains that our teacher preparation programs must be about the business of instilling in all of its graduates the belief that all children can truly learn. Teacher education programs must incorporate opportunities for cross-racial/cross-cultural dialogue, interaction, and teaching experiences in order to help prepare their future teachers for diversity.

Conclusion 2. White preservice teachers express their sense of cultural awareness as related to being a member of the dominant White culture and as an unexamined state of being. White preservice teachers see themselves as different
from Blacks due to their prior experiences, especially childhood experiences, but cannot express what being White means.

**Implication 2.** One of the findings in this research focused on the factors influencing the formation of a racial/cultural identity White preservice teachers, and how this racial/cultural formation affected the sense of cultural awareness for these teachers. The importance of this conclusion is grounded in the racial self-perceptions of the White preservice teachers along with their perceived efficacy to meet the needs of racial minority students.

The research data revealed that four of the interviewees simply viewed themselves as “just White.” Jeri shared that she “didn’t feel a strong pull towards anything, any group.” She knew that she did not relate to or fit into the racial distinction of Black. She knew that there were differences between herself and those Blacks with which she may have had limited contact. So, Jeri self identified as White. Mona explained that she was “White just like everyone else.” In her world there were Whites and then there were others who were not White. Everyone in her White world acted the same and they all looked the same. Racial self-identification was a subject that was rarely discussed by their family or friends.
This research data also revealed that four of the interviewees just simply never gave their racial identity and formation a second thought. In examining this attitude from a Black perspective, Tatum (1997) looked at the development of White identity and suggested,

Because they represent the societal norm, Whites can easily reach adulthood without thinking much about their racial group... There is a lot of silence about race in White communities, and as a consequence Whites tend to think of racial identity as something that other people have, not something that is salient for them. (pp. 93, 94)

The value of this study is that for the first time many of these women actually paused to give thought to whom they were, strictly from a racial point of view. The lack of self-reflection about being a White person in this society distances White people from investigating the meaning of Whiteness and prohibits a critical examination of the individual, institutional, and cultural forms of racism. For White educators, in particular, this invisibility to one’s own racial being has implications in one’s teaching practice, which includes such things as the choice of curriculum
materials, student expectations, grading procedures, and assessment techniques.

Based on their own statements, these White women had never really considered their own racial and ethnic group membership. And like some White educators, the White preservice teachers in this study had never given much thought to how their racial attitudes and beliefs might influence their teaching practices. It is this factor that must be considered by teacher preparation programs. Not only is there a need for the White preservice teacher to have opportunities to dialogue with racial minority preservice teachers but there is also a real need for there to be opportunities for White preservice teachers to dialogue with each other about issues of White identity development, Black identity development and the implications of these identities. For just as the children of color come into the classroom with various degrees of familiarity with what will become the shared culture of the school, the White teacher also comes with a personal background and history that overlap with some aspects of the school’s culture. As she moves to establish class procedures and structures, she draws upon what she has been taught, but her actions are always framed within her own values and experiences (Johnson, 2002).
It is these experiences along with her own personal history, her family’s view of education and involvement with her schooling, the positive and negative memories of her own educational experiences that she brings to the teacher education program and ultimately to her own classroom. Beyond their memories about their own schooling, though, these teachers will also bring their own experience, or lack thereof, with cultural differences, which is critical in shaping their response to the various groups of minority children represented in their classrooms. The most critical point to note is that for many of the White preservice teachers there could be, for the first time, an opportunity to consider issues of race in university classroom. It is at the university, in the teacher preparation program, that many White teachers seriously consider how their racial attitudes may affect what happens in their classrooms.

**Conclusion 3.** White preservice teachers in general did not feel their sense of cultural awareness was raised by classes they had participated in as a part of the college classroom, teacher preparation experiences, especially as related to being prepared for teaching Black students.

**Implication 3.** The women in this study shared varying levels of perceived readiness to successfully teach Black
children. These women also shared that they felt they had varying levels of perceived readiness in the area of communicating with Black parents. Inherent in these perceptions is the extent to which the interviewees felt that they had been prepared by the teacher preparation program to deal with these issues.

Four of the 10 interviewees felt that they were ready to effectively teach and meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of cultural minority children. Conversely, the other six interviewees felt the exact opposite about their perceived ability to do the same. All of the interviewees acknowledged that this topic was one that they had definitely thought about on more than one occasion. One of the interviewees who did not perceive herself as ready felt that there were many things she did not know about teaching minority children and this made her anxious about the prospect.

Wrapped in the perceived readiness of the interviewees to teach cultural minorities, is their assessment of the effectiveness of teacher preparation program to prepare its prospective teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. Only one of the interviewees felt that the college had done a credible job in this area. The rest of the women felt that the college had done very little or nothing at all to address
diversity. Of the four teachers who perceived themselves ready to deal with diversity, two felt that way not because of the efforts of the college but because of other life experiences. Yet another felt ready because she was a communications major and the communications program at the college had opportunities in its program to address diversity. The interviewees felt that preparation for diversity was something that the college should be doing but none of them, except for one, felt that this Deep South College had fully invested the necessary resources to make it a reality.

Another area of concern for the interviewees was their perceived readiness to effectively meet the needs of the cultural minority parents of the children they will teach. This research helped to define yet another element of "effectively meeting the needs," the element of cultural/racial awareness. This awareness, which was clearly evidenced by the stories which were told by the White preservice teachers following the Charity Elementary School experience, will help these White preservice teachers reach out to not only their Black students, but other minorities as well. Seven of the 10 interviewees were very concerned about their ability to deal minority parents. Of the three that felt prepared, one stated that she was more worried about students’
academics; another stated that she felt pretty good about
dealing with all parents except for those with Limited English
Proficiency (LEP). One interviewee who was not particularly
thrilled with the prospect of dealing with minority parents
admitted that she was just plain scared. Again, there was a
stated sense of disappointment in the lack of preparation
offered by the teacher education program at the college. The
White preservice teachers’ comments in this study suggest that
this area has the potential to be one to cause the most
problems for White preservice teachers. It is this area of
perceived readiness that could have major implications for
future White preservice teachers as well as their prospective
students.

Another experience that our White preservice teachers
need to have is exposure to a diverse learning community. Deep
South University is not a very diverse learning community. Its
teacher preparation program also reflects that lack of
diversity. Because White students generally live in
racially/ethnically segregated communities and typically have
little direct contact with people of color, they stand to gain
considerably from ongoing interactions with students and
faculty of color. Direct experience with racial diversity has
been shown to bolster cultural sensitivity, interracial
understanding, and social responsibility on the part of White students (Humphreys, 1998).

**Conclusion 4.** White preservice teachers describe their direct experience with Black children in a school setting (Charity Elementary) as positive and adding to their sense of cultural awareness.

**Implication 4.** The field experience at Charity Elementary School provided a cross-racial educational opportunity that allowed the White preservice teachers to be able to begin to assess the types of educational experiences that may lead them to believe their cultural awareness had been affected, either negatively or positively. Teacher development has to be at the heart of initiatives for developing inclusive practices in schools. Typically teacher education programs have responded to growing diversity among K-12 students by adding a course or two on multicultural education but leaving the rest of the curriculum largely intact (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). While separate courses on multicultural education play an important role in preparing teachers to teach students of diverse backgrounds, there is growing evidence that an add-on approach to diversity does not go far enough (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). One of the reasons this approach does not work is because when faculty members see issues of racism, classism, and diversity
being addressed in special classes, they may assume they themselves are not responsible for addressing these issues as well (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Solely adding a multicultural education course or two to the teacher education curriculum cannot prepare prospective teachers adequately for a changing student population. One of the ways to address this dilemma is through the field experience. Just as the college of education alone cannot accomplish the task of educating teachers who will be sensitive to the growing diversity in their classrooms, it also cannot be accomplished by the university without the involvement and collaboration of professionals from school districts and other diverse community agencies. Efforts to reform teacher preparation are tightly linked to life in elementary and secondary schools. The Charity Elementary school experience provided an opportunity for the White preservice teachers to experience an authentic relationship with minority children in an educational setting. It was here, at Charity Elementary School, that many of these White future teachers began to truly establish bonds with a person from a racial background very different from their own. All 10 of the interviewees spent time at Charity interacting with the students in various teaching activities. Though many of these White women approached these interactions with some
reservation, they soon found the children of Charity Elementary to be very warm and accepting. Prior to their interaction there was a feeling that these children would not be accepting of them because of their White skin. Many of the interviewees were genuinely concerned that the students would shun them or at the very least ignore them. More than one of the White preservice teachers wondered what the Black children were thinking of them. In some ways the women in this study were projecting some of their own biased fears on the children that they were soon to meet. However, the interviewees reported feelings of acceptance and satisfaction in regards to this experience with the all-Black student population at Charity. The interviewees were all totally accepted and welcomed with open arms. There was a perception by all the interviewees that this type of experience helped them to get a better understanding of Black children but more importantly how well they, as White preservice teachers, could interact with Black children. For some, this was the very first time that they had an opportunity to look at children from several different perspectives. In this arena, the arena of Charity Elementary School, they were able to freely incorporate the element of race and culture within their teacher preparation program.
In order for all children to reach their full academic potential they must have a highly qualified teacher in front of them in the classroom. This idea of being highly qualified extends into the areas of appreciation and understanding of racial diversity. Many of the upper-middle class White women in this study had few opportunities to interact with Blacks prior to coming to Deep South University. Once at Deep South they again interacted with peers, university professors, and mentors who looked just like them, White. This interaction further added to the racial deficit experienced by these White preservice teachers. Thus, the Charity Elementary School field experience proved to be an invaluable experience for the women of Deep South College. These women were able, many for the first time, to interact with minority children in an educational environment that allowed them to experience a snapshot of the lives of Black children.

**Study Limitations**

This research study has increased our knowledge on the perceived cultural attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of the White preservice teacher in this study in their teacher preparatory program. Their experiences were varied—yet parallel. The identified themes among their experiences and
perceptions often crossed boundaries and were interwoven within many aspects of their views of their personal, religious, social, and educational lives. As a result, the themes were difficult to isolate completely into one neat category and often bled over into another category. Nevertheless, common themes were identified and elaborated upon. In spite of common themes, the results were not intended to represent all the experiences of White female preservice teachers globally. This research data should be used only as a thumbnail view into the personal lives and mindset of the White prospective teachers who were a part of this study. It was my intent to present the data, uncover meaning from the data, and contribute to the knowledge base on White preservice teachers in teacher education programs based on the data extracted from the women in this study.

The research results exposed a different perspective on diversity and cultural awareness preparation in teacher education programs for the interviewees. In doing so, a salient contribution to the research on diversity and cultural awareness preparation for White preservice teachers resulted. Clearly there was something about the interviewees that made them stand out. All 10 of these women agreed to engage in four different diversity training sessions, and participate in four
different sessions at Charity Elementary School. In addition these 10 White preservice teachers were willing to give their time to share their most private thoughts, and make suggestions which they anticipated might make cultural and racial diversity something to be valued and accepted by future White preservice teachers. Was their willingness to share what is viewed by some as extremely personal information a significant clue as to why each of these women have expressed a desire to engage in one of the most noble of professions, teaching? The mystery can only be solved by interviewing a broader group of White preservice teachers and continue to add to the literature base on this group of prospective teachers. Clearly, the experiences of the 10 women in this study have certainly been worth the research effort to preserve their stories for posterity.

**Recommendations**

The purpose of this research was to produce written documentation of the personal, educational, and social cultural experiences and perceptions of White preservice teachers. Their stories have revealed many avenues that need further exploration. The quantity of qualitative data collected for this research is an indication of raw data that
can be accumulated on White preservice teachers. Several suggestions of specific areas that need future research are listed below.

1. Racial segregation and privilege was alive and well in just about every aspect of most of the White preservice teachers’ lives. Though the process of examining their racial identity can be uncomfortable for White preservice teachers, those who persist in the struggle may be rewarded with an increasingly multicultural and multiracial existence. A longitudinal look at engagement in multicultural and multiracial mentoring/teaching opportunities provided at the freshman level of college for those White students who have expressed an interest in teaching should be compared to other White students who express an interest in teaching and have no multicultural or multiracial engagement.

2. The type of support as well as the types of multicultural and multiracial experiences needed by White preservice teachers before they transition into culturally diverse classroom should be further studied to look for critical time frames to provide support. Additional research regarding the scope and sequence—what type of support to provide, how long it should be
provided, what form it should take, and who should provide it—are means that may reveal information that assists White preservice teachers.

3. The benefits of providing White preservice teachers with experiences working with individuals and communities of color in relationships that place the White preservice teacher and individuals of color on equal footing should be researched.

4. The pros and cons of multicultural awareness and sensitivity should be researched to determine the extent it is promoted throughout an entire campus and what benefits or effects it has for all faculty, not just those in the education department.

5. The feasibility of incorporating within teacher preparatory programs an opportunity for preservice teachers and faculty to share autobiographies needs to be researched. Life writings can reveal differences among experiences and surface attitudes and commitments to be fostered or further examined.

6. Research should be completed on the perceived efficacy of White preservice teachers in teacher preparatory programs to effectively meet the academic needs of cultural minority students. I strongly believe that
White teachers’ attitudes and negative beliefs resulting in low expectations and nonchallenging curriculum contribute to the racial achievement gap that is evident in our school’s today. Research is needed to determine best strategies and techniques for preparing White preservice teachers for effectively communicating and interacting with cultural minority parents.

7. College/university teacher education departments might consider the establishment of a laboratory school with a core of racial minority students which would afford both students and faculty a context for first hand racial experiences.

In addition to suggestions of specific areas that need future research, there are several suggestions in the area of practice as well. Those suggestions are listed below.

1. One cultural educational experience that must be given serious consideration is an infusion strategy whereby issues of diversity are addressed not only in specialized multicultural courses but throughout the entire teacher education curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This spiral approach to the multicultural curriculum has only recently been given serious consideration. Since this is a relatively new approach there is no clear consensus to
how this spiraling should take place. There is also a concern that spiraling will result in superficial attention to issues of diversity, especially since many of those who teach teachers are themselves not adequately prepared to effectively integrate such issues into the curriculum (Banks, 1993).

2. Another experience that our White preservice teachers need to have is exposure to a diverse learning community. Deep South University is not a very diverse learning community. Its teacher preparation program also reflects that lack of diversity. Because White students generally live in racially/ethnically segregated communities and typically have little direct contact with people of color, they stand to gain considerably from ongoing interactions with students and faculty of color. Direct experience with racial diversity has been shown to bolster cultural sensitivity, interracial understanding, and social responsibility on the part of White students (Humphreys, 1998). Like all college students, prospective teachers gain by being educated in a diverse learning community. If this racial/cultural diversity is not present it is likely that they will not develop the
dispositions and skills to be a culturally responsive and sensitive teacher.


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Appendix A:
Preservice Teacher Informed Consent Form

**Title of Study:** Let the Dialogue Begin: Diversity, Cultural Awareness and the White Pre-service Teacher

**Investigator:** Jesse Maurice Dingle

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. John M. Pettitt, Committee Chair

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore potential attitude, knowledge, and behavioral shifts of racial majority pre-service teachers. You will be asked by Jesse Dingle to share in four diversity awareness seminars as well as have four authentic interactions with an elementary school student whose cultural identity may be different from yours. In addition, you will be interviewed at the end of the semester for at least one hour (1 hr.) at a time and location, which is convenient to you. You will be asked to keep a journal of your student interactions. Interviews will be either tape-recorded or video taped. Notes will also be taken. The student interactions and your interview will take place during the 2003 spring semester.

There is no anticipated risk to you, since your participation is limited to exchange of information through interviews and journal writings. You will have the opportunity through participation in this study to share information that will potentially benefit the program, other students and educators.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study. You will be referred to by a pseudonym in order to protect your identity. This consent form, which links you with your pseudonym, will be stored in a locked file at Jesse Dingles’ home office. At the conclusion of this study, the audio/video tapes, identifiable only by your pseudonym will be destroyed. Under this condition, you agree that any information obtained...
from this research may be used for publication or educational purposes of this researcher and the program only.

No compensation will be offered for your participation in this study. However, you will be offered a copy of the completed study in appreciation for your participation. Participation in this study will complement your experiences as a college student. If you decide to drop out of the study, you will receive a thank you note and the opportunity to re-enter the study if desired.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Jesse Dingle, at 3616 Culater Court, Raleigh, NC 27616 or by telephone (919.217.1679 home; 919.518.0016 work). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed the data collected from you, to that point, will be used in the study and will be destroyed with the other data at the conclusion of the study.

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’s Signature_____________________ Date ______

Investigator’s Signature____________________ Date ______
Appendix B:

Charity Elementary Teacher Informed Consent Form

**Title of Study:** Let the Dialogue Begin: Diversity, Cultural Awareness and the White Pre-service Teacher

**Investigator:** Jesse Maurice Dingle, Doctoral Student

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. John Pettitt

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore potential attitude, knowledge, and behavioral shifts of racial majority pre-service teachers. You will be asked by Jesse Dingle to allow 2-3 preservice teachers to observe and interact with students in your class on 4 different occasions. You will be asked to keep a journal of your observations of preservice teacher/student interactions. The preservice teacher/student interactions will take place during the months of January and February, 2003.

There is no anticipated risk to you, since your participation is limited to exchange of information through interviews and journal writings. You will have the opportunity through participation in this study to share information that will potentially benefit the program, other students and educators.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study. You will be referred to by a pseudonym in order to protect your identity. This consent form, which links you with your pseudonym, will be stored in a locked file at Jesse Dingles’ home office. At the conclusion of this study, journal entries, identifiable only by your pseudonym will be destroyed. Under this condition, you agree that any information obtained from this research may be used for publication or educational purposes of this researcher and the program only.
No compensation will be offered for your participation in this study. However, you will be offered a copy of the completed study in appreciation for your participation. Participation in this study will complement your experiences as a professional public educator.

If you decide to drop out of the study, you will receive a thank you note and the opportunity to re-enter the study if desired.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Jesse Dingle, at 3616 Culater Court, Raleigh, NC 27616 or by telephone (919.217.1679 home; 919.518.0016 work). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148).

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed the data collected from you, to that point, will not be used in the study and will be immediately destroyed.

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’s signature _____________________ Date ___________  
Investigator’s signature ____________________ Date ___________
Appendix C:

White Preservice Teacher Interview Guide

1. Tell me a little about yourself. For example, where did you grow up? What was your neighborhood like? What was your religious worship experience like? What were your educational experiences like?

2. Describe your racial identity. Who are the people over your lifetime that have helped you shape your sense of racial identity?

3. Describe what you know about African American culture. How did you learn about African American culture? Are you sure that your information is correct? If so, why? If not, why?

4. As you think back to the experience of working with the student at Charity Elementary School, were there any diversity or multicultural “aha” moments?

5. To what extent do you feel that you have been prepared at the university level to teach children who are racially or culturally different from you?

6. Describe the extent to which you feel confident that you effectively communicated with the African American children you came in contact with during your Charity Elementary School experience.

7. To what extent do you feel that you have been prepared at the university level to communicate and interact with parents of children who are racially or culturally different from you?
Appendix D:

Audit Agreement Form

I, __________, hereby agree to assume the responsibilities of auditor for the research project leading to the completion of the doctoral dissertation of Jesse M. Dingle, doctoral candidate within the Department of Adult and Community College Education at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC. By signing this agreement, the auditor is committing to remain auditor through the completion of the project.

The audit process will begin immediately after data collection begins. The auditor will read over the interview transcripts as the researcher begins to analyze the data. Data analysis and the audit process will occur simultaneously. The auditor will identify the audit trail; check to make sure that researcher does not engage in researcher bias and ensure dependability, confirmability, and credibility by examining the data analysis process form the beginning as conducted by the researcher.

The researcher and auditor will meet at a mutually agreed upon place for the audit process to be completed. The product outcome for the researcher will be a written dissertation document meeting the partial requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Higher Education Administration at North Carolina State University. The product outcome for the auditor will be a letter of attestation to the doctoral committee co-chairs, Dr. Edgar Boone and Dr. John Pettitt, stating that the audit process was successfully completed and that the goals of the audit were duly met.

This contract remains negotiable if difficulties arise between the auditor and researcher such that successful completion of the research project is compromised.

____________________________   ______________________________
Auditors Signature                Researcher’s Signature

____________________________   ______________________________
Date                                Date
Appendix E:

Member Checking Letter

Date

Ms. White Preservice Teacher
Deep South College
123 University Drive
City, State 99999

Dear Ms. Teacher:

Thank you for permitting me to interview you regarding your perceptions and experiences of your personal, religious, social, and educational life as a White preservice teacher. Sharing your experiences with such honesty and candor has added tremendously to this research project.

As a college graduate student, I am extremely aware of the tremendous demands on your time. This consciousness has made me keenly aware of the value of your contribution to my research. As part of the finalization of this project, the data must be analyzed. As part of the analytic process, all the data collected from the interview and subsequently transcribed must be reviewed for accuracy. One technique used to check for exactness is to have you, the interviewee, review the transcript. You may make any additions or corrections for clarity and accuracy. If the transcription is acceptable as received, please e-mail me at _______________ or call me at the above number. If you would like to make changes, please note those changes on the appropriate page and return those pages to me. It would be most helpful if you could respond by ___________.

Your cooperation and willingness to be a part of this research has allowed White preservice teachers to share their unique experiences with others. The results of this research may also serve as a catalyst for positive change for those who follow in our footsteps and as inspiration for other White preservice teachers as they transition into their racially and culturally
diverse classrooms. In the meantime, if I can assist you in any manner, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Jesse M. Dingle

Enclosure