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Abstract Of The Dissertation

First-Year White Teachers’ Constructions of Parents of Color

By Kayne Ellis

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Novice teachers struggle with issues of classroom management, paperwork, and job security (Anhorn, 2008; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Onafowora, 2004); however, novice teachers also face the difficulty of negotiating identity in their new settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Beginner teachers fill a specific niche in the school, neither being full members of the profession nor complete outsiders. As a result, relationships with colleagues shape the experiences and attitudes of new teachers (Goffman, 1959; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). Keeping in mind the socialization process of novice teachers, this yearlong study investigated how Whiteness, or rather the positioning of white practices as the norm (Morrison, 1992), manifested itself in the relationships between first-year white teachers and parents of color.

The study investigated the ways that novice public educators interacted with and understood parents of color. Through a qualitative methodology, this study unpacked the first-year white teacher’s struggle for acceptance into a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) while attempting to resist dominant ideologies about parents of color. Coming from the same teacher-preparation programs, the two participants brought expectations, understandings, and constructions of public education (Clark, 1988; Rumelhart, 1980). Initially, both participants shared similar views on the role of the parent in the school system. At the beginning of the study, these two novice teachers both
believed that the race of the parent would not matter in their interactions throughout their first year. While these expectations influenced their experiences at the school, it appeared that one participant fell victim to the dominant ideological beliefs about parents of color, while the other participant demonstrated partial resistance (Mueller, 2006; Tozer, 1993).

This study explored the elements that may influence the ability for a first-year white teacher to accept or resist the dominant ideologies surrounding parents of color.

Under the current budgetary constraints, it is imperative for educators to reevaluate equity in education. As the United States is experiencing its greatest economic recession in decades (Robelen, 2009), we must attempt to stave off further inequitable divisions between the races. As it is surely possible that this economic recession will further reinforce white privilege, educators must attempt to lessen the impact on the school system. As explored in the findings of this study, first-year white teachers offer a unique opportunity to battle the latent (and manifest) assumptions about parents of color. Since these beliefs ultimately influence the expectations placed on students of color, all modes of resistance must be encouraged.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Context of the Study

Minority students are actively being denied educational opportunity and educational equality. While de jure discrimination ended in public education during the Civil Rights Movement, de facto discrimination continues to plague students of color (Figueroa, 1991) and creates invisible barriers (McDermott & Samson, 2005). While many believe that Brown vs. Board of Education equalized education and granted access to all students, more than 60 years later, the institutional nature of US public schools perpetuates racism (Jenson, 2005) through the reinforcement of privileges bestowed on white Americans (Kendall, 2006). While students of color are legally allowed equal education, overwhelmingly, they are still not equal to their white counterparts. Great disparities exist between the academic achievement and opportunities of white students and students of color (Oakes, 1986).

In a racist society, public schools function as an extension of that racism (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Racism is perpetuated and preserved by Whiteness, or rather the operating norm in the United States (Hyland, 2005). With white norms as the benchmark, students of color are placed in positions of subordination. Whiteness is associated with achievement, goodness, and purity (Lee, 2005). Students and families who do not fit the dominant assumptions and norms are labeled as inferior and expectations of them are lowered (Figueroa, 1991). Since most teachers are white, including those in racially diverse schools (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006), Whiteness negatively affects students of color (Lee & Sims, 2008a). The belief that education can elevate blacks to the
white standards (Kendall, 2006) situates students of color as inherently deficient because of their race. However, teachers have the opportunity to either encourage or resist the inequitable practices in schools (Hyland, 2005). Novice teachers may be key in understanding how "doing what is normal in those schools that serve students of color, or even doing what is seemingly wonderful for students" (Hyland, 2005, p. 432) may result in the perpetuation of inequitable education.

**Subjects of the Study**

Novice public school teachers face the overwhelming challenge of blending their preservice education, personal goals, and preconceived ideologies with hands-on experience in the classroom (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Clark 1988). The classroom offers many challenges to the novice teacher, scholastically, practically, and ideologically. The novice teacher is often overwhelmed by the range of responsibilities inside of the classroom, specifically in the areas of discipline and paperwork (Anhorn, 2008). Additionally, as reflected in the research literature currently available, parental involvement becomes a source of concern and anxiety for novice teachers (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005). Further complicating the difficulties that the novice teacher faces in connection to parental involvement, racial assumptions function both manifestly and latently in the school system (Jenson, 2005; Ladson-Billings 1999).

My research interest focused on public school first-year white teachers and their experiences with race and parental involvement. First-year teachers are unique from all other teachers in the sense that they may have the technical, textbook knowledge of teaching, but lack the on-the-job practical application of that knowledge. The core knowledge base of first-year teachers comes largely from texts, preservice programs, and
a short student-teaching experience. Specifically, the student-teaching experience, while offering many benefits, often does not replicate or offer enough of the experiences of a teacher solely in-charge of all classroom responsibilities (Boz & Boz, 2006). I, therefore, suggest that while student-teaching is beneficial to the preparation of teachers, that it does not accurately depict the responsibilities of a full-time teacher (Flores, 2006a). Student-teaching experiences vary greatly from university to university, and from placement school to placement school. For example, student-teaching may only demand that the individual teach a partial schedule and the student-teacher’s outside responsibilities may be greatly limited depending on the cooperating teacher.

According to the literature on belonging and legitimization (Oleson & Wittaker, 1968), beginning teachers undergo a period of apprenticeship during which their identities are being shaped. This apprenticeship phase will affirm the degree to which they belong to the profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Olesen & Wittaker, 1968). Student-teaching, therefore, provides some insight into and preparation for the demands of teaching, but it is during the first year of teaching that the individual begins to assert his/her true teacher-identity. Furthermore, first-year teachers are not yet “real teachers” in the sense that they have yet to fully adopt the teacher culture that allows them to be granted the title of “teacher.” The first-year teacher identity is unique and offers insight into the process of becoming a member of the educational system (Flores, 2006a).

Trapped between being a student-teacher and being a real teacher, first-year teachers lack experience, but yet have a professional title. Therefore, first-year teachers are a specific population in the school that may have a degree of agency, as they have yet to be fully accepted by the dominant teacher culture.
However, I suggest that the novice teacher is so consumed with survivability (Bullough et al., 1991; Woods, 1977) that an independent identity is difficult to create. In most public schools, the first-year teacher is a largely creation of the school’s culture in which he/she works because he/she has little time or chance to develop a purely independent identity. The beliefs, expectations, and ideologies that the novice teacher developed throughout his/her preparatory program become less prominent because he/she adopts the dominant culture of the school (Mueller, 2006; Tozer 1993). Instead, the dominant culture of the school embeds itself within the first-year teacher. The dominant public educational system is composed of administration, fellow teachers, support staff, students, and parents. The adoption of traditional beliefs is not out of desire, but due to the overwhelming, dominant culture in which the new teacher functions (Tozer, 1993). However, at the same time, the first-year teacher has the unique opportunity of creating his/her identity against the dominant school system. Often the creation of this identity is not against, but rather with the system (Bullough et al., 1991).

Most importantly, the first-year teacher begins his/her teaching career with preconceived notions of what his/her experiences in the classroom will be (Bullough, et al., 1991). Before beginning any career, one will have expectations and fears regarding job performance, efficacy, and positive rewards. First-year teachers are not immune to expectations and fears (Flores, 2006a). It is therefore important to understand how those expectations and fears actively affect a novice teacher’s ability in the classroom and/or in the school. Furthermore, those preconceptions influence the novice teacher’s self-efficacy and the ways in which he/she has the ability to adopt or oppose the dominant culture of the teaching community.
Theoretical Framework

The dominant culture of the teaching community generally reflects the dominant culture in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1999). According to Critical Race Theory, white behavior, beliefs, and communication patterns are the normative, acceptable culture in the United States (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). Those who do not conform or ascribe to the normative patterns are identified as deficient (Figueroa, 1991; Kendall, 2006). Deficiency becomes a means to justify the accrual of privileges for whites in the United States. As a social institution, public education suffers from issues of racism (Figueroa, 1991). While it manifests in areas, such as homogeneous tracking (Oakes, 1985), specifically, I intended to examine the ways that the parents/guardians of color are positioned as inferior. Families of color, in particular, are viewed negatively in public education. The literature suggests that teachers often assert that parents of color do not care about their children’s education (Lopez, G.R., 2003) and communities of color are to blame for the failure of their students (Connerly, 2002; Hale, 2001; Hess, Shipman, Brophy, & Bear, 1968; Lee, 2005). Research on people of color suggests that society reinforces stereotypical views of people of color and that these stereotypes permeate every facet of our society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Schooling, in particular, is simultaneously a perpetrator of these racial frameworks (Jenson, 2005), as well a victim to the larger social framework that positions people of color as “lacking” (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

In further connection to the research questions of this study, it is important to note that issues of isolation, uneasiness, lack of confidence, and insecurity plague the first-year teacher (Fritz & Miller, 2003; McCann et al., 2005). These feelings mixed with a
desire to fit in and fulfill the preexisting expectations of the job could lead to the replication of the dominant beliefs in the school surrounding involvement of parents of color. I argue that interactions with colleagues and district expectations of parental involvement influence the ways in which new teachers view and choose to interact with parents of color. Consequently, novice white teachers often adopt the dominant culture’s racist beliefs and language around parents of color. Specifically, language is at the heart of the phenomenon of adopting the beliefs of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As a result, the novice teacher is entirely exposed to a language to which he/she has only been partially exposed. This discourse does not exist in the same capacity within a preservice program, but rather uniquely exists within the school structure itself. Specifically, an insider is influenced by the language and behaviors of the particular environment (Gee, 1990; Gutierrez, 1994). The novice insider, the new teacher, must encounter and make sense of the assumptions/practices around parental involvement of students of color. Specifically, the literature suggests that the language around involvement of parents of color is negative. The complaint is ever-present that involvement of parents of color is inadequate and misdirected (Winters, 1993). While the complaint is audible, the actions of teachers to combat this issue are invisible.

Perhaps those teachers who exist on the periphery of the school community can oppose the dominant beliefs of the school regarding parents of color. However, many new teachers want to “fit in” and “do right” (Anhorn, 2008). This intense desire to “be good” like their colleagues may force the new teacher to abandon the ideals with which he/she had approached teaching. Additionally, the need to maintain job security may also affect the reasons that the novice teacher may embrace the dominant culture. Between the
overwhelming feelings and desire to “fit in” with other teachers, new teachers may abandon their preservice frameworks of education and replace them with the beliefs/behaviors of the dominant culture. Therefore, through patterns of parental involvement, the status quo of white norms is likely to be maintained and perpetuated in schools (deCarvalho, 2001). I believe that modeling by veteran teachers significantly controls the maintenance and perpetuation of the status quo and stereotypical beliefs inside the school about parents of color.

**Structure of Study**

The dissertation attempts to unpack the ways in which novice teachers accept or reject the dominant beliefs and ideologies regarding the parents of color and their role in public school. My research direction rests on the intersection of novice teachers and parental involvement using Whiteness Studies as the theoretical framework. Therefore, my interest specifically focuses on first-year white teachers in racially diverse public schools. I hoped that these criteria would yield the greatest available chance of understanding the ways that ideologies about involvement of parents of color develop in teachers.

**Research Questions**

In attempt to understand how white teachers come to view parental involvement of students of color, my research focused on two essential questions.

1. What do first-year white teachers expect of parents/guardians of color?
   a. Specifically, how do first-year white teachers in diverse public schools express expectations, ideas, and beliefs about parental involvement for students of color?
   b. What are first-year white teachers’ understandings of the roles, successes,
failures, and contributions of parents/guardians of color? And how do first-year white teachers come to these understandings?

c. How do traditional expectations of parental involvement shape first-year teachers' understandings of parents/guardians of color?

d. What are the sources (past and present) of these constructions?

2. How do first-year white teachers adopt or resist dominant racial assumptions about parents/guardians of students of color?

Significance of Study

If educational reform is ultimately classroom reform, then teachers are ultimately responsible for carrying out systemic reform (Anyon, 1997). Research exists separately on parents of color in education and on first-year teachers; however, there is little research on public school first-year white teachers in connection with parents of color. To improve the current educational status of students of color, we must look at how first-year white teachers are initiated into the larger school culture. If we can understand first-year white teachers’ initiation, then perhaps further research can reveal if first-year white teachers can learn effective techniques to adopt democratic frameworks regarding involvement of all children’s parents. Potentially, first-year white teachers may be a unique opportunity to manipulate the current ideological framework. Since a public school can be a site of reproduction, as well as resistance, understanding the first-year white teacher’s experiences and beliefs regarding involvement of parents of color will enable us to more effectively prepare and guide new teachers towards culturally responsive pedagogy, or rather the content and practices that validate students’ knowledge through recognition of cultural and family differences (Belgarde, Mitchell, &
The significance of my study lies in its ability to contribute to the larger existing research literature on equity in schooling. If equity in public education is our goal, then we must go beyond identifying inequity and move towards ways to combat inequitable schooling. I believe that my study exposed an additional means to understand and potentially combat inequitable schooling: through first-year white teachers and their relationships with parents of color. While my study focused on first-year white teachers and involvement of parents of color, their relationships were neither the problem nor the solution alone. Racial inequity in public schooling is connected to, but not isolated to, teachers’ perceptions of parents/guardians of color. I assert that teacher-parent relationships are symptomatic of the larger societal disease of racism. However, by structuring teacher preparation and induction programs to encourage positive views of all parents/guardians, we will step in the right direction in the battle against inequitable schooling. Therefore, my study’s significance rests on the idea that my research helped to expose the ways first-year white teachers construct parents of color. Further studies could build on this research in hopes of the opportunity to combat inequity in schooling through redesigning teacher preparation and induction programs. Specifically, first-year white teachers’ agency may offer unique hope that they can combat the dominant culture of the school since they are not yet fully accepted members of the community of practice. Hopefully, this research study will draw attention to the significance of the first-year white teacher in reshaping the social fabric of the school.

Summary

Inequitable education plagues our society. White privilege (Kendall, 2006) drives
institutional racism (Jensen, 2005) in our public schools, resulting in unequal experiences and outcomes for students of color than for white students (Oakes, 1986). The operating norm, Whiteness (Hyland, 2005), ensures that people of color do not have the same set of privileges nor the same access to goods in society. Students of color function within this structure, as school reinforces the system of white privilege.

In an attempt to understand how inequitable education is built into the school system, this study focused on first-year white teachers. The novice teacher’s experience is unique from all others, as he/she is neither member nor outsider of the teaching profession, but rather undergoes an apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Oleson & Wittaker, 1968). While much research has focused on this period of apprenticeship when novice teachers are often overwhelmed with teaching responsibilities (Bullough et al., 1991; Clark, 1988), little research has been conducted on first-year white teachers and their interactions with parents of color. The need for this research study rested on that gap in the literature.

Using a qualitative research design and the theoretical framework of Whiteness Studies, the study focused on two first-year white teachers and their constructions of parents of color. Specifically, it looked at the influence of being a novice teacher had on the individual’s ability to resist or adopt dominant ideological beliefs about parents of color. The design, significance, and purpose of this study focused on two research questions that attempted to unpack if/how preconceptions and expectations of parents of color were developed/changed throughout the first year of teaching.
Chapter II

Review of The Literature

Novice Teachers

Many novice teachers feel overwhelmed and quit the profession. Education as an economic institution faces the fundamental problems of teacher retention and early dropout rates. Specifically, novice public school teachers encounter on-the-job stress, which may result in changing careers. While beginner teachers may arrive at the school with high expectations and strong intentions, there is a 40 to 50% drop-out rate within the first seven years of teaching (Hayes, 2006). Additionally, on a larger scale, it is reported that 20 to 30% of novice teachers leave the career (Ingersoll, 2001). Specifically, most attrition occurs during first two years (Gordon, 1991), with 20-30% of teachers leaving during first five years (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001). On a macro level, there have been great efforts to improve the beginner teacher experience. Teacher shortages, attrition rates, and increased student populations have all contributed to the need for the school system (and educational system) to provide a thicker network of support for novice teachers (Ingersoll, 2001).

The first year of teaching elicits many fears, anxieties, and disappointments in the novice teacher. First-year public teachers realize that they have a pressure to perform, behave, and adapt to expectations that they had not anticipated. They experience on-the-job disappointment, frustration, and discouragement. These feelings manifest daily, and serve as a constant reminder of the perceived failure that novice teachers must face (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). “A beginning teacher is expected, from the first day of her career, to complete all tasks asked of veteran teachers” (Anhorn, 2008, p. 15).
New public school teachers often experience feelings of isolation, intense reality shock, large class sizes, low salary, unclear expectations, difficulty with classroom management, angry parents/guardians, overwhelming paperwork, and poor relationships with colleagues (Anhorn, 2008). With all of these possible motivating reasons to leave the profession, it is important to help better orientate new teachers to the realities of the profession. It is the reality of teaching, not education as a career aspiration, which pushes novice teachers to leave the job. Novice teachers often have difficulty reconciling personal goals with professional realities. Therefore, their personal needs and desire to be successful can conflict with their ability to perform in the classroom. Beginning teachers who prioritize personal needs over student needs can often talk themselves into leaving the career because it feels like a wrong fit (McCann & Johannessen, 2004).

Novice public school teachers often feel so much pressure to just make it through the day that they essentially exist on survival mode. ‘Survival strategies’ (Woods, 1977) are a means of self-preservation (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). The introductory period to teaching is simultaneously plagued with survival and discovery. During this period of time, novice teachers will shape their educational philosophies and strategies that may very well shape the rest of their career (Wood & Waarich-Fishman, 2006). Unfortunately, many novice teachers feel that they have to just get through the day (or week or year) and things will improve. They cling to the hope that tomorrow will be better (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Survival mode may be a direct result of low self-efficacy, with fear or stress about losing his/her job (Huling, 2006) directly affecting how the novice teacher manages everyday activities.

Novice public teachers may feel that their survival depends on their ability to
effectively manage their classroom. Effective student discipline becomes a measurement of success (Onafowora, 2004). Therefore, with such overwhelming pressure during the first year, the novice teacher may confuse instructional success with classroom management (Bullough et al., 1991). Additionally, novice teachers mistake efficiency with being effectiveness. Bowman (2007) uses research on student teachers to differentiate between efficient teachers who manage pupils and effective teachers who lead pupils. Instructional effectiveness falls to the wayside when novice teachers function in survival mode.

**Novice Teachers’ Preconceived Notions of Teaching**

Weinstein (1989) worries that researchers have not paid enough attention to the past experiences or the assumptions that novice teachers have about the educational process. Novice public school teachers arrive at the job with a set of preconceived notions about what it means to be a teacher. These expectations are based on social history and can be considered social products. Social products are “creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact [and] have a history; meanings are historically grounded and fluid” (Bullough et al., 1991, p. 3). Therefore, the behaviors and expectations of novice teachers are social products that have been created over time.

Primarily, this “implicit theory” of teaching (Clark, 1988) suggests that beginner teachers have been influenced by their own past experiences with teachers and public schooling. They have an expectation of how teaching should be based on images and experiences in their lives. These expectations include what it means to be a teacher, a student, a parent, and a school in and of itself (Bullough et al., 1991). Beginner teachers
arrive in the classroom with a schema, or “skeleton” through which they grant meaning and interpret the activities within the school (Rumelhart, 1980). McCarthy (2003) asserts that teacher education is not the sole influence on teacher candidates, but social issues also wield great influence on the development of beliefs, including those about race.

Teacher preparation programs contribute to the beginner teacher’s schema. It is essential to understand how novice teachers arrive at their teacher preparation programs with a set of meanings, which then combine with the information that they receive in the program (Bullough et al., 1991). When they graduate from the teacher preparation program, their past experiences, as well as their program’s standards dictate the ways in which the novice teacher will establish his/her classroom. Richardson (1996) claims that teacher preparation programs are fundamental in shaping future teachers’ conceptions about teaching, learning and the school as an institution. And, if the future public school classroom is a diverse one, then the prospective teacher is often unprepared because he/she has typically only taken a single required multicultural education course (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006).

It is often overlooked that teacher preparation programs greatly influence beginner teachers’ philosophical development. The novice teacher may face conflict between the program’s philosophies, his/her preconceived expectations about teaching, and the reality of the classroom. It becomes a challenge to incorporate the program’s philosophies into the reality of the classroom (Stanulis, Fallona, & Pearson, 2002). This may lead to frustration and feelings of one’s “reality as a teacher is so much different than [one’s] reasons for entering the profession” (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 142). In Flores’s (2006a) study, novice teachers felt under-prepared to assume the true
responsibilities of teaching. “The realization of the mismatch between the idealistic expectations of the professional-to-be...and the reality of teaching, has led to a continual and sometimes conflicting process of challenging personal beliefs and of relearning from practice and/or ‘unlearning’ the ‘unreal theories’ acquired in college” (Flores, 2006a, p. 2029).

Furthermore, in Boz and Boz’s (2006) experiment, they found that some prospective teachers in the experiment felt that they did not have much opportunity to link theory and practice. The prospective teachers did not observe what they had learned being practiced by teachers in their field experiences (Boz & Boz, 2006). Therefore, novice public school teachers face many more challenges than simply learning the curriculum and completing the paperwork involved in teaching, but struggle on a philosophical level. They are essentially faced with the challenge of realigning their personal belief systems and making sense of their preparation program’s philosophies, while fulfilling basic job requirements. This struggle affects novice public school teachers in the extent to which they are able to effectively manage and make sense of the work that they are assigned to do.

**Influence of other Professionals on Novice Teachers’ Identities**

Teaching is an isolating career. In particular public school teachers can exist within their own classrooms with very little interaction between, dependence on, or cooperation with others. Hundreds of teachers can work in the same school, but on some level, their actual job performance has nothing to do with one another. In contrast with many other careers, teaching only demands small levels of interaction with peers. Through narrative inquiry, Stanulis and colleagues (2002) found that novice teachers
must often grapple with feelings of isolation. Novice teachers must learn how to
overcome “feelings of being left to their own devices” (Stanulis et al., 2002, p. 79). This
sink-or-swim experience is often exacerbated by veteran teachers who feel that new
teachers have to make it on their own (Gordon, 1991). Furthermore, school leaders and
peer teachers often fail to provide the structure and support that would ease new teachers’
initiation. Information and support are not quickly provided to novice teachers, leaving
them to figure out coping mechanisms (Flores, 2006b). As a result, novice teachers either
develop survival techniques or flee the teaching career.

Often, novice public school teachers feel that they should not ask for help.
Because teaching implies a position of knowledge, seeking counsel from peers places the
novice teacher in a position of lacking knowledge. New teachers are fearful of asking for
help because they do not want their colleagues to perceive them as unprepared or
unknowledgeable (Gordon, 1991, Weasmer & Woods, 2000). As a result, novice teachers
will avoid asking for advice. Beginning teachers often find “themselves facing a
dilemma: being aware of the lack of knowledge about the tasks they had to perform and,
at the same time, acting as professionals who [are] aware of, and knowledgeable about
their duties as teachers” (Flores, 2006b, p. 55). However, novice teachers who feel that
they cannot discuss issues with peers, find themselves feeling extremely isolated and
insecure (Roehrig et al., 2002). With the lack of guidance and support, novice public
school teachers are left to their own devices. In addition to all of their other concerns,
they often end up learning by on-the-job training opposed to asking for the needed
support (Flores, 2006a).

Relationships with colleagues affect new teachers’ feelings about their own self-
efficacy, the school system, parents, and teaching philosophies. A sense of community and positive relationships can help ensure that teachers are satisfied with their jobs (Williams, 2003). New teachers need to be welcomed and supported as they transition into their schools. Novice public school teachers need the support of colleagues, but often receive limited help or allow coworkers to negatively influence their teaching perceptions and experiences. Additionally, negative experiences can result in aggravation and an aversion towards teacher-talk for the novice teacher (Roehrig et al., 2002). Peer relationships become a source of conflict for novice teachers. Using case study findings, Roehrig and colleagues (2002) claim that relationships with colleagues manifest in negative experiences. They claim that negative feelings towards teaching can result from engaging in teacher-room talk, insulting students, being pessimistic about students, encouraging rumors, being cliquish, not respecting new teacher’s authority, lacking communication with other teachers, and experiencing conflicts with other teachers. Additionally, novice teachers may feel unable to discuss problems with fellow teachers, may feel pressure to act in accordance with other teachers’ expectations, and may disagree with the fundamental goals of education (Roehrig et al., 2002). These negative experiences with coworkers shape the novice teacher’s ability to effectively perform his/her job. It is evident that a lack of teamwork and peer camaraderie makes it difficult for novice teachers to effectively transition into the system (Flores, 2006a).

Since teacher attrition plagues the public education system, many schools attempt to provide a mentoring or induction program for novice teachers. These induction programs intend to shape positive experiences for the novice teacher; however, this may not always be the case. Mentors often interfere with prospective teachers applying the
methods/theories they learned in university (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O’Keefe, 1992). Additionally, while it is recognized that induction programs have a key effect on the novice teacher’s experiences, a poorly constructed program may have even worse effects than no program at all (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005).

**Socialization and Becoming a Member of the Teaching Profession**

It seems that little has been researched about the socialization processes that occur during the first few years of teaching (Bullough et al., 1991). However, research reveals that the ways in which the novice teacher interacts with colleagues influence the ways in which he/she views and fulfills job responsibilities. Socialization begins in the student-teaching phase and continues into the first few years of a teacher’s career. According to Friebus (1977), during student-teaching, socialization is a reflexive process, in which the cooperating teacher is the greatest influence. However, a wide range of people, both professional and non-professional, influence the student-teacher during his/her preparation stages. Other teachers, college supervisors, relatives, principals, parents, and pupils all influence the prospective teacher (Friebus, 1977). Additionally, prospective teachers’ personal beliefs and preparation programs are affected by their interaction with peers.

Since teacher-preparation programs affect novice teacher’s expectations of his/her career (Richardson, 1996), it is important to understand how socialization manifests during the student-teaching experience. Mueller (2006) suggests that some prospective teachers will make sense of the system and others will just adopt the dominant thinking. While some prospective teachers become victims of the socialization process, and hence adopt the institutionalized expectations, others teachers are able to resist those pressures,
maintaining personal style.

Socialization is not always in the benefit of the novice teacher and may challenge his/her personal expectations and abilities to fulfill his/her job commitments. Since each novice teacher arrives in the school with personalized expectations and behaviors, it is difficult to generalize how socialization and development take place. Additionally, since people are not “socialized” but rather socialize themselves, it is a challenge to generalize experiences (Bullough et al., 1991). Some novice public school teachers are able to maintain their personal philosophies and belief systems. In essence, they resist the “pressures to conform to an institutionalized teaching role and succeed in establishing a productive and coherent teaching self and concomitant style” (Bullough et al., 1991 p. 11).

Understanding the socialization process requires accepting that teaching is a community. According to Vaughan (2007), a community of practice exists in teaching, which is directed by backstage and frontstage discourses. The concept of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) rests on the assertion that to become a member of a particular community that there is an apprenticeship through language and observation of actions. Wenger (1998) posits that components of the Community of Practice include: joint enterprise (“what it is about”), mutual engagement (“how it functions”), and shared repertoire (“what capability is has produced”). Essentially, one’s membership in the community of practice is framed by language, which either places the individual in an ‘ingroup’ or an ‘outgroup.’ Goffman (1959) suggest that individuals perform for their group on a frontstage and prepare on the backstage. Specifically, in the case of teacher, the frontstage would be in front of colleagues, while backstage would be the classroom.
Therefore, novice teachers enter a community of practice in which they quickly learn the acceptable frontstage and backstage discourses that allow them to function as members of the ingroup.

New teachers want to belong and their interactions with fellow teachers greatly affect their sense of belonging (Anhorn, 2008). Olesen and Wittaker (1968) identify the process of belonging as *legitimation*. Essentially, *legitimation* is the “sanctioning” of one’s belonging to a certain profession, or rather the process of adopting the professional identity that secures acceptance into that community. For *legitimation* to occur, the individual must have a desire to be treated like a professional in that community. That desire can be either denied or reinforced by others in the community. Specifically, in school, pupils and colleagues play an important role in *legitimation* of the novice teacher.

As within each profession, there is an acceptable discourse in teaching. Discourse is how one acts and talks in ways that a particular community and its professional members will understand (Gee, 1990). Socially acceptable language drives the discourse (Gee, 1990). In the public schools, all teachers, including novice ones, may feel that they must adopt the discourse of their school. Specifically, scripts exist within a discourse, which dictate the normative ways that community members are expected to act using language and gestures (Gutierrez, 1994). Breaking down the idea of scripts, Scott (1990) suggests public and hidden transcripts exist. The public transcript is the open interaction that occurs between the dominant and subordinate, while the hidden transcript is the social space where resistance to the public transcript can occur. When applied to public schools, it is likely that new teachers will struggle to adopt the dominant discourse. Due to limited power, new teachers are likely to learn and accept the socially acceptable
language and corresponding actions. However, new teachers should be viewed as potential means to challenge the status quo or public transcript through the use of a hidden transcript. Tozer (1993) suggests that ‘non-scholarly’ and ‘dominant culture’ views influence a teacher’s way of making meaning and making decisions about teaching practices.

**Novice Teachers and Parental Involvement**

Teacher concerns are greatest during student teaching and the initial years of teaching (Fritz & Miller, 2003). Relationships with parents/guardians are one of the many stressors that new teachers face. Preservice teachers and novice teachers are often nervous about the types of relationships that they should develop with families. Teacher preparation programs should, therefore, provide guidance in communication practices and conflict resolution with families (Baum & Schwarz, 2004). According to Anhorn (2008), working with parents/guardians is a training area in need of development. Specifically, teacher education programs need to focus on several key areas, including providing more accurate experiences in the areas of completing paperwork, teaching inclusion classes, and working with parents.

Lacking experience and preparation, the novice public school teacher may experience great frustration with parents/guardians based on actual or perceived parental characteristics that the novice feel are in conflict with his/her expectations. Furthermore, the novice teacher may feel frustrated that parents/guardians may not be supporting them (or the student) in the ways the novice teacher would like. The values, standards, consequences, and rules at home often conflict with those at school. Novice teachers must learn how to navigate and/or make sense of those obstacles (Roehrig et al., 2002).
All teachers, particularly new teachers, must understand that communicating with parents/guardians can be a difficult process when parents do not share the same perspective of their children as the teacher. Since parents/guardians believe the best in their children, novice teachers must try to remain objective without disregarding the parent’s feelings (Roehrig et al., 2002). Empathy becomes an important part of this process. This is a particularly difficult task for novice public school teachers who are often in survival mode.

First-year teachers often overlook the importance of parental involvement and emphasize the importance of classroom management. Since principals, supervisors, and the public often emphasize classroom management in evaluating the success of teachers. While Cakmak (2008) also found that classroom management accounted for most of student teachers reported problems McCann and colleagues (2005) posit that parental relationships become a key worry for novice teachers.

Parents/guardians become a source of blame for the novice teacher’s and/or student’s failure in the classroom. Because some new teachers lack confidence, it is easier to blame the home rather than to assume responsibility. Accordingly, many novice public school teachers may attribute problems in the classroom to parents who they believe negatively influence the educational process. “Untraditional” households often become a stigma that teachers, including novice ones, use as a scapegoat (Onafowora, 2004). Additionally, McCann and colleagues (2005) found that new teachers worried that a parent may become dissatisfied with their performance. Consequently, feelings of inadequacy manifest in relation to novice teacher-parent relationships (Roehrig et al., 2002).
Through case studies, Roehrig and colleagues (2002) found that teacher-parent relationships face many obstacles. For example, teachers cite that they have difficulty maintaining effective communication with parents/guardians who are immigrants, divorced, alcoholic, angry, neglect their children, cannot attend conferences, or have no time to help their children. Additionally, parent-teacher relationships may become strained if the parent objects to assignments, disagrees with teaching methods, does not back up discipline, or disagrees with grading. On a more extreme level, the novice public school teacher may be greatly affected by a parent who requests that the child be moved to another class, threatens to have teacher dismissed, blames the teacher for the child’s difficulties, or does not respect the teacher’s authority (Roehrig et al., 2002). In case studies, Bullough and colleagues (1991) found that novice teachers often felt challenged or discouraged by parental support at home. While some novice teachers displayed feelings of sorrow or sympathy for students who they saw as ‘victims’ because of their home situations, other novice teachers saw that parents stifled their children’s academic success. Additionally, other novice teachers experienced parents who were perceived as overly interested and stifled the teacher’s ability to do his/her job (Bullough, et al., 1991). Novice teachers struggle to make sense of parental involvement.

Section Summary

In this section of the literature review, the novice teacher’s struggles and the influences that they face were explored. Accordingly, novice public school teachers face high levels of stress and often function in survival mode. In this survival mode, novice teachers focus on issues of classroom management and attempt to achieve a sense of belonging amongst the other teachers. As in other careers, novice teachers undergo a
period of apprenticeship, during which they try to become members of their professional community. To become a member of this community, socialization takes place. During the socialization phase, mentors and other teachers become actors in developing the new teacher’s identity. The socialization phase may place the novice teacher in the position where education from his/her teacher preparation program conflicts with the dominant practices and ideologies in the school. Preconceived notions drawn from personal school experiences and teacher preparation programs impact how a novice teacher takes on the role of teacher. The intersection of preconceived ideologies, university training, and socialization influences the novice teacher’s understanding of parental involvement.

While classroom management maintains greater importance in the mind of the novice teacher, parental involvement also becomes an issue of concern. According to the literature, novice teachers mostly experience negative feelings towards parents, including blame, resentment, and fear.

**Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is a complex means by which students, parents/guardians, teachers, and schools are judged; however, the boundaries and expectations of parental involvement are undefined. While there is a natural belief that parental involvement, in its most basic definition, is beneficial to all involved, it seems that degree and form of parental involvement varies greatly between socioeconomic class, race, location, household type, and age group. Regardless of the context, since public schools wield great power in society, it is their obligation to offer and encourage parents to participate in the school system (Winters, 1993). The impact of parental involvement is not only perceived to be beneficial to the school and community, but through many studies it has
been demonstrated that there are positive effects on students (Henderson & Berla, 1994). However, conflict arises when the presumptions of parental involvement are not clearly transferred into defined expectations. Parental involvement implies that parents understand and accept the school’s goals/objectives. There are expectations that all parents have the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to fulfill those goals/objectives (Winters, 1993).

The term parental involvement may be “too narrow a descriptor to express fully the nature and scope of relationships possible among adults responsible for the education and development of children” (Tutwiler, 2005, p. 109). With the changing structure of households and families, ‘family involvement’ is often preferred over ‘parental involvement’ (Tutwiler, 2005). Nonetheless, parental involvement presents itself in a variety of forms and in varying intensity. Parental involvement is perceived as a measurement of parental interest in the child’s education. It may take the form of simply attending back-to-school night (Tutwiler, 2005) to attending special school functions (Winters, 1993). Furthermore, parental involvement is also measured by participating in meetings with school personnel, serving on action committees, and simply responding to school-requested information (Winters, 1993).

Specifically, parent-teacher conferences continue to be an acceptable format for the teacher and parent/guardian to discuss how education is being supported in both the classroom and the home. Effective conferences allow time and privacy for teachers and parents to fully discuss the student’s social and academic growth and goals (Tutwiler, 2005). Since parent conferences are valuable means for parents and teachers to promote the growth of the student, Decker and Decker (2003) posit that parent conference
scheduling should consider the job demands of socioeconomically challenged parents.

Parental involvement may also take place at home. Parents may support their child’s education by providing an appropriate environment for the child to complete his/her homework. The parent may assist the child with or monitor the completion of that homework, as well as engage the child as to the happenings of the school day. Subsequently, the parent/guardian is reinforcing the belief that school is important and sharing interest in the fulfillment of the school’s objectives (Winters, 1993).

With increased technology, parents and guardian have more instant access to teachers and the public schools. With district/school websites, information can be more easily dispersed to those who have access to the internet. Many schools are using technology to communicate with parents (Tutwiler, 2005), with some public schools offering online access to students’ grades. While the report card traditionally remains the measurable format to express student academic and social success to the parent, technology is influencing how this information is conveyed (Tutwiler, 2005).

The type and degree to which parents participate varies greatly from school to school (Swap, 1990). Parents’ activity in their children’s schools may vary with the type of educational leadership that exists, as well as with community and personal variables. Neighborhood incentives and programs may also affect parental involvement in either a positive or negative manner (Winters, 1993). There are many barriers to parental involvement. Parents may be reluctant to participate because of the image of the school in the community. Parents may lack confidence in the school due to teacher attitudes, administrator attitudes, and the school’s decision-making processes (Decker & Decker, 2003). Studies on parental involvement conclude that most parents truly want their
children to succeed in school; however, they face barriers to their involvement. These barriers include time availability, an absence of a nurturing environment, lack of clarity of parental expectations, and cultural difference (White-Clark & Decker, 1996).

Furthermore, disempowerment becomes a barrier to parental involvement. If parents do not feel that they can make a difference, they will be less likely to participate in school. Sarason (1991) suggests that if a person has no stake in the school and feels as if he/she lacks a forum to express opinions, then he/she will choose not to be engaged in that environment.

Educators’ negative opinions of parental involvement often result from an inability for parents/guardians to fulfill expectations. As a result, opinions of parental involvement may manifest in ideas such as “parents are a problem (and often a nuisance), they are either not interested or they are too interested, and they take up time and energy that should be spent working with the children” (Bastiani, 1993, p. 109). On the contrary, when parents are seen as fulfilling the expectations of the school system’s vaguely defined expectations, educators hold positive opinions of parental involvement. The positive feelings may manifest in the following ways, as “parents have (increasingly) clearly defined rights – and obligations—in respect to their children’s schooling, schools cannot survive without the active involvement and support of parents, teachers and parents both have key roles in a shared enterprise, and schools have a legal, contractual and professional obligation to work with (all parents)” (Bastiani, 1993, p. 109).

Welcoming parents/guardians into the school community validates their worth. In a sense, parents’ ideas and actions are viewed as beneficial to education. Conversely, by excluding parents/guardians (or some parents/guardians), the school invalidates their
worth and conveys the message that their knowledge and/or contributions are inconsequential to the school’s functioning and/or the child’s betterment. Winters (1993) suggests that parental involvement, at its core, is a simple fulfillment of our basic human desire to be accepted and fit in. Parental/guardian involvement with their children’s education validates the worth of the parents and the school, and implies a symbiotic relationship off of which both sides thrive. As a social system, there is reciprocity between an involved individual and the public school. Winters uses reciprocal enculturation to account for the ways in “which new cultural patterns are acquired by both systems, family and school, as they develop and mature, and each can be endowed with new energy that changes its configuration” (Winters, 1993, p. 3).

While we may want to believe that all parental involvement is positive and warmly received by the school, this belief is not true. Parents/guardians have been perceived as interfering with the processes of the public school. Certain parents are viewed as being too demanding or interested in the curricula, classroom structure, school rules, and school personnel. Some educators resist increased parental involvement because the decision-making processes become too taxing (Tutwiler, 2005).

**Suburban Versus Urban Parental Involvement**

Socioeconomic status, race, and family structure influence the types of parental participation that occur in school. Heymann and Earle (2000) claim that any discussion of parental involvement as innately equal is misleading. Equal opportunity to participate in meaningful ways does not exist. The occupational demands of parents/guardians’ lives vary, usually by socioeconomic status. The reality is that some working-class, poor families do not have the same opportunities as wealthier families to fulfill the public
school’s expectations of parental involvement (Heymann & Earle, 2000).

Suburban parental involvement and urban parental involvement differ greatly. The suburban public schools, primarily composed of white and/or middle or upper class citizens, perceive parents/guardians as making positive contributions to their children’s success. Suburban parents/guardians often have a long-standing legacy of participation in the school. They participate in both visible, overt ways at school activities and committees, as well as in less overt and more symbolic means of support at home. The values of the suburban parents/guardians tend to mirror or complement those of their school system. Their homes reinforce the expectations and norms of the school. Winters extends this claim by stating that “parental presence in the neighborhood and affluence [are] symbolized by comfortable homes, orderly external environments, and formal associations” (Winters, 1993, p. 25). Therefore, suburban parents/guardians wield power in the school system because of their visibility and wealth. However, Lightfoot (1978) claims that it is not wealth that leads to the success of suburban schools, but the concordance of parents’ goals for their children with the teachers’ views of sound educational practice. It is the interaction between the home goals and the public school’s educational practices that increases the success of the school as a whole.

Economically disadvantaged parents/guardians often experience feelings of intimidation and rejection because they believe schools do not encourage them to be involved or to have input in the educational processes of their children. These parents/guardians often retreat and are then perceived as being uninterested in their children’s education (Chavkin, 1989; Zeldin, 1990). Urban public schools, often inhabited by African-American and ethnic minorities who are economically
marginalized, commonly blame parents/guardians for lack of involvement and the ‘extra’ work that they must put into the academic and social growth of the student. Often, the traditional expectations of parental involvement are mitigated by socioeconomic factors in the poor, urban communities. Both the school and the parents/guardians are left dissatisfied and resentful. These parents/guardians then feel excluded and worthless in the eyes of the school community. They retreat and avoid contact because they perceive public schools as erecting insurmountable barriers (Winters, 1993).

School-related problems often escalate because there is no established relationship between the parent and the school. When the school then tries to involve the parent in the remedying the school-related problem that the child may be having, it may result in unresponsiveness because of the lack of established trust. Furthermore, this then confirms the school’s belief that the parents/guardians never cared anyway. This cycle of distrust and disconnect repeats itself (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Dunlap and Alva (1999) claim that there is a tendency for schools to promote their values, goals, and priorities, so the goals of parents/guardians for children are often disregarded. They claim that this phenomenon results from an ‘educentric’ view. Essentially, the teacher’s goals support the school system, which often denies parents inclusion into the school. Parental/family involvement is expected to fit into this ‘educentric’ view (Dunlap & Alva, 1999). In order to increase parental involvement across cultural, racial, and social class lines, public schools can provide translation services, workshops, clear expectations of ways to participate, and create a nonthreatening environment (Decker & Decker, 2003). Parental involvement positively affects student success. Regardless of the parents’ race, class, or educational level,
children succeed more when parents are involved. Essentially, racially and economically diverse schools make great gains when parent-teacher collaboration exists. Graduation rates rise and dropout rates decrease. High school students make more realistic plans for the future when their parents/guardians’ involvement with the school is strong (Decker & Decker, 2003).

To be fully welcoming of parents/guardians, teachers need to hone classroom practices that are supportive of students of all backgrounds. Culturally responsive education is posited as a means to recognize family backgrounds and to break down boundaries that may exist between school and home (Tutwiler, 2005). Specifically, Belgarde, Mitchell, and Arquero (2002) define culturally responsive education as teaching practices and content that validate all students’ knowledge within the classroom by recognizing cultural and family differences (Tutwiler, 2005). To reduce racist allegations, teachers need to become informed about family and cultural differences (Wolfendale, 1992). Teachers must understand family differences in child-rearing practices and attitudes. Teachers are in a unique position to help parents/guardians support their children’s success, therefore, both teacher preparation programs and workshops for active teachers need to more comprehensively train teachers to improve parental involvement (Wolfendale, 1992).

Parents/Guardians of Color and School

The conflict between the school and the home often centers on opposing beliefs about what is in the benefit of the child. When the school’s expectations do not correspond with parental expectations, blame and resentment often result. This conflict arises between culturally-different parents and the school when the school believes that
the parents’ beliefs are in disaccord with its objectives. Since cultures hold different beliefs on how to raise, care for, and educate children, the school is put in the position of mediating those differences. Unfortunately, schools often fail to do so, thus subjugating parents of color and making them feel less valuable than white parents. Furthermore, “common behaviors, values, and concerns that guide the work of mothers often obscure unique aspects of mother practice that emerge from differences in the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which mothering takes place” (Tutwiler, 2005, p. 3). It is this very gap that accounts for cultural lag explanations for family change. Essentially, “social transformations disrupt understandings and practices associated with social institutions long before new practices that address institutional change are firmly established, routinely implemented, and collectively accepted” (Tutwiler, 2005, p. 27).

Instead of looking at the structure of schools, some educational theorists have focused attention on the family or community of underachieving students of color. The responsibility or blame is returned to the culture or family. Jencks and Phillips (1998) recognize that there is a large disparity between black and white academic achievement. Through their quantitative research involving adoptive/biological families, Jencks and Phillips find blame within the black community. They posit that it is the black family’s fault for not preparing or instilling the values needed to succeed in their children. Jencks and Phillips dismiss other means of explanations, such as tracking and/or inequitable funding. Hirsch (1987) suggests that there is a body of shared knowledge, or a national/cultural literacy, that enables students to succeed. Hirsch posits that disadvantaged students lack this cultural literacy. Hirsch views students as having no agency and teachers as conduits of knowledge through a banking method.
Connerly (2002) finds fault in the black community and suggests that black people recognize their role in the perpetuation of their own inequity. Bonilla-Silva (2003) blames this type of racism, *laissez-faire racism*, as perpetuating inequality because it puts the blame on the person of color for being ‘hands off’ in their own betterment. Furthermore, Hess, Shipman, Brophy, and Bear (1968) found that black mothers were at fault for the failure of their children. They claimed that the black mothers’ parenting skills were not as good as the white parents’ skills. Similarly, Hale (2001) places blame on parents for not providing the middle class support that a child needs to succeed in school. In Lee’s (2005) study on failing Hmong Americans, even though the teachers saw failure as a class issue opposed to a race issue, they still blamed families for not instilling the proper values in their children.

In addition to the blame being placed on the family or the community, Lewis (1966) coined a term that has perpetuated cultural deprivation theories. Lewis’s (1966) “culture of poverty” has had a lasting influence on the language surrounding inequity in schooling. Lewis claims that poor children (often of color) have a different culture that disables them from acclimating to the expectations of school. Lewis essentially asserts that poor (and/or of color) students suffer from cultural deprivation.

DeCarvalho (2001) claims that public schools exclude certain parents/guardians to maintain the status quo. Public schools reinforce and reproduce inequity in society. Through excluding parents of color from the education processes, unequal educational outcomes naturally result. White middle class families are in advantageous positions and are able to manipulate/maneuver the educational system to their best benefit (deCarvalho, 2001). Wragg (1989) differentiates between ‘rights’ and ‘power’ as the way for certain
parents to navigate the school system. Specifically, ‘rights’ means entitlement, while ‘power’ is the ability to direct change. However, not all parents/guardians have ‘rights’ or ‘power’ in the school system. While some parents/guardians have the ability to navigate and influence the system, others are disempowered. The white middle class’s goals for its children are fulfilled (deCarvalho, 2001), while poor parents and/or parents of color are often labeled as ‘at risk’ or ‘hard-to-reach’ (White-Clark & Decker, 1996).

Furthermore, Irving (1990) suggests that the cultural deficit model is a means to discredit the worth of the black community by implying that there is something fundamentally inferior or lacking in black culture. Sampson (2007) focuses on parents and the home as a means to improve parental involvement. Discrediting the cultural deficit model, Sampson believes that black parents need to change “their behavior, beliefs and attitudes in such a way that they might better prepare children for school” (Sampson, 2007, p. 121). Some public school teachers feel the same way, and do not inform themselves about the lives and situations of the parents/guardians of color. These teachers rely on stereotyped images and ideas about the homes of students of color. Since the 1960s, the culture of migrants and minorities has often been seen as an obstacle for public school educators to overcome (Tomlinson, 1993). The white community and the public school system harbor hostility towards people of color and exclude them from decision-making processes (Tomlinson, 1993). Furthermore, language, culture, and educational attainment are all attributed for the failure of communication between teacher and parent. Immigrant families may have different experiences and expectations of school. They may not know how they are expected to participate in the school environment. However, schools must give all families an opportunity to be contributing members (Decker &
Mead and Wolfenstein (1970) posit that all children are learners regardless of their culture. The school must recognize that all children (and parents) come to school with funds of knowledge. Students have funds of knowledge that contain historically developed practices, knowledge, and skills that enable their households to function and flourish (Gonzales, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, and Gonzales, 1994). Thus, while families of color, as well as socioeconomically deprived families, may have limited interactions with the public school, it does not mean that they are uninterested in the academic success of their children (Tutwiler, 2005). Schools should acknowledge that parents naturally want the best for their children and that cultural/racial differences should not exclude those parents from being participating members of the school community. Parents/guardians and the home have a profound effect on the development of intellectual and emotional intelligences of children (Wolfendale, 1992).

**Section Summary**

In this section, literature pertaining to traditional views of parental involvement, focusing on parents of color, was explored. According to the literature, there are unclear expectations and definitions of appropriate parental involvement. Parent conferences, helping with homework, and volunteering at the school are traditional means that define parental involvement. However, urban parents and parents of color encounter schools differently than white suburban parents. Many parents of color lack the resources and privileges that white parents have in the school. Schools are governed by white middle-class standards and failure to fulfill those expectations positions both the student and his/her parents/guardians in a position of inferiority. Teachers often view parents of color
and economically deprived parents as not providing enough of the right kind of support. Consequently, parents of color are blamed for the failure of their children and become scapegoats. Suggestions to improve involvement of parents of color range include increasing teacher sensitivity to cultural differences and school-provided accommodations. While some theorists continue to assert that minorities are biologically or culturally deficient, other theorists suggest that all parents desire the best education for their children and should be accepted by the school community.

**Whiteness Studies**

Race is present everywhere in our lives (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Ideas about race continue to develop and reflect societal beliefs and needs. These needs may serve to reproduce the social structure by justifying the inequity of certain society members through explanations of inferiority. There existed (and still does exist) the belief that some people are inherently worthier and deserving of privilege. In the past, science became a way to reinforce this belief (Kendall, 2006) with white supremacy resting on the core beliefs that race is biologically determined and whites are biologically superior (McDermott & Samson, 2005). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, race was considered to be a biological phenomenon. A scale of proximity to whiteness (i.e., Native Americans closer to white than Africans) was used to rank the races (Kendall, 2006). Relying on the belief that race is based on genetic differences, essentialists explain racial/ethnic inequality as an outcome of genetically determined ability. Accordingly, different races are just more capable than others (Eysenk, 1971).

Although the genetic explanation for underachievement of students of color does not currently hold the popularity among educational theorists as it once did, the argument
is still supported by some theorists. Jensen’s (1969) work on adoptive twin studies continues to be used as empirical evidence of genetic difference between races. *The Bell Curve* (Hernstein & Murray, 1994) became a widely read text in the mid-1990s and helped to resurface many questions concerning race, possible genetic differences, and explanations of academic achievement. Hernstein and Murray’s (1994) text posits that academic success is genetically predictable. Although most researchers do not support this notion, the theory itself still affects popular societal beliefs about race and ability. These beliefs still have the ability to influence educational policies and practices.

It was only more recently that we realized that race is not a biological, but rather a social phenomenon (Kendall, 2006). Specifically, Sullivan (2006) criticizes educational theorist John Dewey for reducing race to simply a political and economic (rather than social) phenomenon. The marked divide between being white and being non-white in America is not due to biological inferiority, but rather a socially constructed means to subjugate certain members of society. “It is not just that Black and White are chromatically distinct, but that they have become corporal signifiers of social misery in America” (Jackson, Warren, Pitts, & Wilson, 2007, p. 69). Race has no biological or scientific proof, and therefore is a constructed myth (Figueroa, 1991). Bonilla-Silva (2003), views race as a socially and historically created phenomenon. Using a social reproduction viewpoint, he envisions racism as a structure that reinforces white privilege in order to keep the oppressive system working. Therefore, a *racial ideology* is the framework that the dominant group uses to justify the status quo of racial/ethnic inequality in education.

Omi and Winant (1986) define race as a concept that signifies social conflicts and
interests by referring to different types of human categories. They posit that religion and science became obsolete markers to subjugate others because race can be a much more visible category. Additionally, inequality is structured through *racial formation*, or in other words, the “sociohistoric process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 55). Since social construction is an idea that serves social purpose, race serves a social purpose (Kendall, 2006).

Accordingly, Omi and Winant (1994) create a sociological explanation of race through their term *racial formation*. Essentially, *racial formation* is a sociohistorical explanation of how racial categories are created, maintained, and developed as positioned within the hegemonic structures. Therefore, hegemonic structures utilize race to position certain groups as dominant, and others in disadvantageous positions of inferiority.

A system of advantage and disadvantage emerged many centuries ago in the United States. While traditionally the system depended upon biological explanations, the system is now upheld through socially constructed beliefs about race. According to Banton’s (1987) rational choice theory, race is not a fixed category, but is used to position certain groups in advantage or disadvantage. Through “alignment” people bind together through joint action, which create groups (Sullivan, 2006) that are granted or denied privilege.

“Racial” engages broader social, cultural and national difference than the physical distinctions the term originally signaled” (Levine-Rasky, 2008, p. 52). While the field of biology finds race practically useless, the social world uses race to make sense of the world (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Accordingly, race is both ideological and epistemological (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, since race is a social...
construction, race relations then deal with ways of seeing, labeling, and interacting (Figueroa, 1991). It is therefore through a bigoted/racist frame of reference that race is constructed. Figueroa (1991) defines racist frames of reference as the assumptions and myths that structure certain situations through race. Racist frames of reference create boundaries between groups by reinforcing the identities of individuals and groups by race. With cultural habits shaping individual habits, race functions unconsciously and subconsciously (Sullivan, 2006). Additionally, race is fueled through unspoken assumptions and patterned distributions of power, which function as cyclical sources of one another (Figueroa, 1991). Therefore, by transmitting messages about race and white privilege, parents, teachers, and friends develop one’s unconscious life (Sullivan, 2006).

While researchers give much focus to what the racial/ethnic minorities do not have, attention should be given to what the dominant, white group does have. McLaren (2001) posits that whiteness as a racial category and norm, resulted out of the political and economic control by European Americans. Power is the foundation for racism. Whites have the power, leaving other groups in positions of subordination (Hyland, 2005). Fine (1997) claims that color is manufactured and that whiteness is equivalent to privilege. While differences between the races appear as merit-based achievements, it is truly the perks of being white that enable success. With her proposal that with whiteness comes privilege, Fine (2004) argues that false meritocracy and the invisible norm of whiteness perpetuate a system of advantage that leaves out minorities.

Race has become more complicated since the Civil Rights Movement lifted the legal barriers of race, but left many invisible barriers still in place. These invisible barriers are more difficult to examine and understand (McDermott & Samson, 2005).
Therefore, racism is the de facto way that society functions. Its very design places some people in positions of advantage and others in positions of disadvantage. These advantages are allocated through rewards, status, and resources (Figueroa, 1991). Specifically, racism advantages whites at the expense of racialized groups (Levine-Rasky, 2000).

**Evolution of Critical Legal Studies to Critical Race Theory**

Critical Legal Studies (CLS) preceed Critical Race Theory (Howard, 2003). Critical Legal Studies emerged as a leftist legal movement (Ladson-Billings, 1999) that essentially questioned the way that the law privileged the wealthy and disadvantaged the poor (Parker, 2003). Essentially, CLS examines how legal discourse creates and reinforces class structure (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Prominent CLS theorist Crenshaw (1988) states that, “critical scholars have attempted to analyze legal ideology and discourse as a social artifact which operates to recreate and legitimate American society” (p. 1350). CLS attempts to unpack what legitimizes American society’s placement of certain members in positions of advantage.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Whiteness Studies (WS) grew out of Critical Legal Studies as theorists felt the CLS did not look at the racialized elements of law (Parker, 2003). According to Ladson-Billings (1999), Derek Bell and Alan Freeman gave rise to CRT when they became concerned with the rate at which racial reform was taking place. However, one must not overlook that racial control has been looked at in both law and education for quite a long period of time (Johnson, 1999). Early pioneers in racial theory, Woodson (1933) identified school as reinforcing the oppressor, which further oppressed “the Negro,” while DuBois (1903) suggested that African-Americans had a
“double-consciousness” or rather two identities that could not be reconciled: American and Negro.

While racial dominance in education, law, and society has long been analyzed, CRT attempts to unpack how social inequity functions in the United States. Early on in the evolution of CRT, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) believed that race was un-theorized, unlike gender and class (at that time). They suggested that there are three basic ideas to help understand social inequity. First, race greatly determines inequity in the US. Secondly, the US Constitution privileges property rights over human rights. Thirdly, race and property intertwine to become a way to understand social inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, expanding Critical Legal Studies, Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw (1993) claim that Critical Race Theory sees racism as endemic, rejects notions of colorblindness, recognizes that race contributes to systems of advantage/disadvantage, demands that communities of color be given voice, and attempts to end oppression.

While CRT evolved out of CLS, women’s studies and ethnic studies become models after which CRT follows (Smith-Maddox & Solarzano, 2002). Modeling itself after other theoretical frameworks of marginalized groups, CRT uses feminism, Marxism, post-structuralism, and Critical Legal Studies to more complexly analyze race/racism (Donnor, 2003). Therefore, as a framework, Critical Race Theory situates race at the center (Howard, 2003). As a theory, it suggests that racism is intertwined into our national history and our legal system (Howard, 2003). As a political project (Powers, 2007), Critical Race Theory rests on the belief that racism is a given, or rather is normal, in America. And, accordingly, it is only extreme cases of racism that stand out enough to
be legally remedied, while everyday occurrences of racism are not given much attention (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). CRT attempts to unmask and expose how racism functions in the United States in ways other than blatant, overt acts (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Therefore, to effectively employ CRT, one must look to history, reject neutrality, and realize racism is widespread in the United States (Donnor, 2003).

The Critical Race theorist’s job is to look at how race and racism are central to US culture (Loutzenheiser, 2003). By focusing on race, CRT examines the assumptions about what appears neutral or normal in terms of rules, policies, and standards, but really is a system of advantage and disadvantage (Vargas, 2003). Through this examination, CRT can reveal the reality of the racial hierarchy (Lopez, G.R., 2003). Specifically, Critical Race Theory has been adopted by educational theorists who attempt to understand the inequity that exists within the school system. Originally, Tate and Ladson-Billings help expand CLS into CRT in education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). “CRT in education is defined as a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of African American and Latino students” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 42). While Critical Race Theory needs more attention in education through research and practice (Howard, 2003), CRT in education is used in several ways. First, Critical Race researchers theorize about race as it intersects with sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression in school. Secondly, they demand neutrality in educational research by opposing dominant ideologies. Furthermore, they employ counter-storytelling as a means to understand and expose racism (Smith-Maddox & Solarzano, 2002).
Evolution of Critical Race Theory into Critical White Studies

Our dominant discourse, or rather our way of talking and thinking, reinforces and reproduces patterns of whiteness (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999). Therefore, Critical Whiteness Studies “shifts to the discourse, the culture, the structures, the social relations of whiteness that produce racialised subjects including whites” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 274). Whiteness Studies moves away from racializing the other and rather focuses on the positions of power that are granted to whites (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005). It is not a criticism of white people, but rather an examination of the socially constructed power that is granted to whites (Gillborn, 2005). It rejects biological and essentialist beliefs, and insists that whiteness, like other races, is socially constructed (Levine-Rasky, 2000). It looks at racism as a network of structures that oppress certain groups and advantages others (Levine-Rasky, 2000).

Critical White Studies is often believed to have begun with David Roediger’s (1991) text *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class* and Toni Morrison’s (1992) text *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination* (Johnson, 1999). Specifically, Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* (1992) questions the taken-for-granted role of whites and whiteness as the norm. Furthermore, Dyer (1993) and Frankenberg (1993) led the resurgence of the ideas (Solomon et al., 2005) posited very early by authors such as W.E.B. DuBois, Gayatri Spivak, and Martin Bernal who all addressed issues of whiteness (Johnson, 1999). However, the discourse surrounding whiteness traditionally focused on labels of Otherness and what whites are not (Kellington, 2002). “Consistent with Critical Whiteness Studies – the emerging corpus of writing that takes white racialization and the exercise of domination and
privilege as its departure point in anti-racism – and more generally with a critical race theory, ‘white’ is best understood not as an empirical reality, but as a process of becoming, even as a way of ‘doing’ identity” (Levine-Rasky, 2008, p. 52).

Furthermore, “whiteness is a complex, hegemonic, and dynamic set of mainstream socioeconomic processes, and ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and acting (cultural scripts) that function to obscure the power, privilege, and practices of the dominant social elite” (Lee & Sims, 2008a, pp. 1-2). CWS demands that whites ‘divest’ themselves of their privileges (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Whiteness Studies must be critical, relational, and contextual (Levine-Rasky, 2002). Whiteness is not static, but relational (Frankenberg, 1993) since it is always positioned in context. It holds no meaning unless it is in relation to the Other (Levine-Rasky, 2002). Whiteness intersects with other social identities, such as gender, class, religion (Jackson, et al., 2007).

The White Race

The formation of whiteness as a racial/ethnic identity has been formed very differently than other racial identities (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). McDermott and Samson (2005) posit that while whiteness comes with privilege, its racial formation is not like other races since it lacks narratives of development, making it culturally empty. Since race is socially constructed, so too is whiteness (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, & Bradford, 1999). Many “whites still construct much of their sense of identity based on an understanding that they are not black” (McKinney, 2005, p. 197). Furthermore, many whites do not consider themselves as having a race, which reveals the normative nature of whiteness (McDermott & Samson, 2005). Most commonly, whiteness is seen as empty of cultural formation (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999).
Moon (1999) explores the process of white enculturation. She writes that the “white enculturation process simultaneously depends on both the embracement and denial of ‘whiteness’” (Moon, 1999, p. 179). Essentially, she asserts that white enculturation is the process by which whiteness as a norm is drained of any cultural or structural marker. It becomes a general, rather than a positioned, way to be in a world where whiteness is an illusion (Moon, 1999).

White Norms and White Privilege

In the United States, “‘white’ is significant in its conveyance of power and privilege rather than its demarcation of ‘race’ defined by physicality, religion, place of origin or any other quantifiable measure” (Levine-Rasky, 2008, p. 52). “Americanness” is often used and understood as synonymous with whiteness by both people in the US and people from other countries (Jay, 2003). Therefore, whiteness in the United States is commonly accepted as the norm, or the universal condition (Moon, 1999). Even though there may be exposure of different cultural values, white cultural values excel (McCarry, 2008). White cultural practices become universal, rather than specific to whites, thus positioning whiteness as the norm (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). Furthermore, whiteness is associated with consumerism, and subsequently whiteness has also become a ‘code’ for wealth (Kellington, 2002).

“Racism relies on institutional power and the mask of normalcy to subordinate people of color” (Hyland, 2005, p. 431). With whiteness as the norm, whites are granted privilege. White privilege grants power and resources based on skin color (Kendall, 2006). This privilege is institutional, but not always specifically personal (Kendall, 2006). Whites use their skin for their own advantage, which automatically puts non-
whites at a disadvantage (Hughes-Tafen, 2008). Furthermore, Harris (1993) poses whiteness as the accrual of property. This legal theorist expands the definition of property to include rights, not just tangible items. Additionally, McIntosh (1992) suggests that whiteness allows more social and economic opportunity; allows whites to ignore other perspectives without fear of consequences, enables whites to criticize the government without fear; protects whites from the concern that their children will mismatch with teacher/employer expectations; and enables them to falter without mistakes being blamed on their race. Furthermore, the rules for occupying space reveal how white is the norm. A white person automatically assumes that he/she can occupy any space (Sullivan, 2006). When white people feel uncomfortable in a predominantly black environment, it goes against the norm of whites feeling that they can freely enter any space. By contrast, blacks (and other nonwhites) do not have this same right (Sullivan, 2006).

Some question if white privilege is just unavoidable (Jenson, 2005). However, until we understand how white racial identity shapes and maintains privilege, we cannot understand the complexity of racism and racial inequity (McDermott & Samson, 2005). Often whites are unaware of the privilege that their skin grants them or choose to deny their privilege to avoid being considered racist (Jenson, 2005). White people excuse their racism by not admitting, recognizing, or seeing white privilege (Sullivan, 2006). Moon (1999) posits that whites evade and disconnect from whiteness. Therefore, whites do not see issues of race, racism, or power relations as playing a significant role in their lives. The language around whiteness (i.e., “Whitespeak”) allows for disembodiment or rather the idea that some unknown agent is responsible for racism in the world (Moon, 1999). Language around whiteness excuses white privilege by protecting whites from seeing or
acknowledging their privileges.

There is a lack of ownership or responsibility for the system of privilege that exists along the racial lines. The ignorance of white privilege contributes to and reinforces white privilege (Sullivan, 2006). Specifically, in the public school, white parents are not aware of their whiteness or privilege, and therefore fail to realize how easily they navigate complex social systems (Reich, 2002). Perhaps these parents fail to do so because people often choose to avoid personal negative consequences by avoiding historical narratives that challenge the status quo (Lee & Sims, 2008b).

Whites often do not see their own whiteness and its role in the system of racism because they can only recognize overt racism (i.e., Ku Klux Klan members) as the problem (Lee & Sims, 2008b). Sullivan (2006) differentiates between supremacy as consciousness and white privilege as unconsciousness. Therefore, gross displays of whiteness (like white supremacy) have adverse reactions, but invisible whiteness is not reacted against in the same fashion (Levine-Rasky, 2000). McKinney (2005) concludes that even when people see individual cases of prejudice, they fail to see the institutionalized racism that functions on a systemic level. Additionally, white people have difficult seeing themselves as agents in the racialized parts of their own lives (McKinney, 2005).

Recognition of whiteness often puts whites on the defensive (Marx & Pennington, 2003) and the acknowledgment of white privilege elicits anger (Kendall, 2006). When asked to consider whiteness, whites fear conflict and loss (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Therefore, white people want to disregard race. And, the denial of white privilege allows whites not to see or take responsibility for the misappropriation of power, resources, and
privilege between races (Kendall, 2006). White people do not actively search out information or knowledge about other races (Sullivan, 2006). Many whites oppose the idea of white privilege because they do not want to be considered racist (Jenson, 2005). However, only once we recognize the institutional processes of privilege granted by whiteness, can we recognize our own personal privileges (Kendall, 2006).

Whiteness cannot be constructed as a monolithic theory (Supriya, 1999). Whiteness and its privileges are not experienced in the same way for all white people. Standpoint Theory suggests that experiences may vary within the same group. According to Orbe, Groscurth, Jeffries, and Prater (2007), Standpoint Theory posits that not all members of the same group have the same experience. As a theory, it tries to understand the standpoint (i.e., position) of the subordinate person. From the position of the subordinate person, the dominant social structures are revealed through the marginalized point of view. Standpoint Theory is traditionally used in feminist studies, but is applicable to all marginalized positions (i.e., race, religion, sexuality, class) (Orbe et al., 2007). Accordingly, not all whites have the same white experience. Class, gender, religion, sexual preference, among other factors influence how much whites benefit from white privilege (McKinney, 2005).

If whiteness is a continuum of privilege and connects to other social identities, such as gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexual identity (Levine-Rasky 2002), then there are levels of belonging within the white race (Kellington, 2002). Different statuses exist within white groups (i.e., hillbillies, crackers, rednecks, and white trash) (Hughes-Tafen, 2008). Specifically, homosexuals and poor whites do not share the same experiences as the normative, middle class, heterosexual whites (McDermott & Samson,
2005). These are categories of the white “Other” (Hughes-Tafen, 2008). The lower class members of the white working class do not recognize their own privilege because the white upper class has more. Not all whites have similar experiences of white privilege.

**Whiteness in Public Schools**

In connection to education, Whiteness Studies attempts to have teachers examine their own racial identity and how it shapes their understanding of students (Solomon et al., 2005). In the past, white people purposefully created inequitable public schools, but now no one is deliberately trying to create racist schools. However, the institutional structure of schooling perpetuates the existence of racism in education (Jenson, 2005). Very simply, Ladson-Billings (1999) posits that racism in the public school is an extension of racism in society. Through the hidden curriculum, children learn the values and ideas of society. While most people conceive school as a level-playing field, in reality, school is a means to reproduce social inequity (Jay, 2003). Kroll (2008) claims that students bring to school assumptions based on race and a racial hierarchy, which are inextricably linked to their surrounding culture. Institutions that reproduce inequity may be as large as society as a whole, or as focused as the school environment (Figueroa, 1991). Since racism is embedded in our everyday life, in order to understand educational inequity, whiteness needs to frame our understanding (Levine-Rasky, 2000). While explanations of poverty as reason for inequity in school are popular, race cannot be ignored (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Overwhelming, the teaching population is white, which means that many of these white teachers are teaching in racially diverse schools (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006), further causing whiteness to negatively impact students of color in public schools
There remains the traditional belief that education can elevate blacks to the white standards (Kendall, 2006). This assertion treats white behavior and expectations as the norm, and anything else as inferior or wrong. Often, pupils who do not fit the dominant assumptions and norms, are labeled as inferior and expectations of them are lowered (Figueroa, 1991). For example, university classrooms, like most classrooms, are dominated by white, middle class ways of discussion (Sullivan, 2006). Sullivan suggests that raising hands, waiting turns, and other acceptable classroom behaviors equate whiteness with being democratic (2006). Failure to act in accordance with the white standards positions the student of color as undemocratic. Specifically, in her study, Furumoto (2008) concluded that Latino families are often seen as deficient because they are judged using a white lens.

Through her study of Hmong Americans, Lee (2005) explores the notion of “codes of whiteness.” She claims that white activities are the norm. Being white is associated with achievement, goodness, and purity. The failing Hmong Americans were more closely identified with African-Americans because blackness is equivalent to being poor, uneducated, and violent. As experienced by the Hmong American students, other groups of students of color simply fill the category of nonwhite. Similarly, Nancy Lopez (2003) uses second generation Caribbean youth, who often self-identify and are identified as black/other to demonstrate how race (and gender) is a social construct. Through race-ing and gender-ing, social identity is created. Similarly, the immigrant experience is captured in Olsen’s (1997) text. Olsen claims that immigrant students are shut out from opportunities because they become “racialized.” Lee, Lopez, and Olsen each demonstrate how the immigrant student of color is victim to white norms that place them in the lower...
position of “other.”

Furthermore, marginalized parents are often seen as uninvolved or uncaring since their interactions with public schools fall outside of the norm (Lopez, G.R., 2003). The school becomes neutral, resulting in the faulting of the parent of color. Student failure is a result of the home environment, not the school. Public school educators insist that parents of color act like white parents in order for their children to succeed. The arising discourse positions parents of color as lacking the ability to produce educationally successful children. However, the problem is that acceptable parental involvement is defined using specific criteria that usually correspond with racial privilege (Lopez, G.R., 2003).

According to Gerardo Lopez (2003), public schools will face increasing difficulty as they become more culturally diverse. As the demographic shifts, the economic gap widens and becomes even more obvious. The public school population is growing with immigrants and non-English speakers. With this shift, parental involvement needs to be at the forefront of educational research on school equity. Furthermore, there needs to be joint decision making between community and school. Involved parents increase their child’s success (in specific subject matters, as well as in general attitude towards school), and this should not be isolated to just white parents (Lopez, G.R., 2003).

**Strategies for Antiracism**

The question on how to combat racism and promote antiracism, centers on socially constructed meanings of race. While Critical Race theorists do not accept all suggestions, researcher recommendations range from colorblindness to story-telling. Multicultural education is seen as a way to combat racism and white privilege. Figueroa (1991) posits that multicultural education does not deepen the divide, but can be
‘antiracist’ through the acceptance of cultural difference and promoting solidarity across groups. However, multicultural education is problematic. While it tries to combat white privilege and is better than colorblindness, it often focuses on some markers of difference (i.e., food, dress, and dance) and ignores others (such as power and economic opportunity) (Furumoto, 2008).

Colorblindness, while often thought of as a goal to end racism, perpetuates racial oppression (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). A race-blind society reinforces the invisibility of whiteness and its privileges. It does not overthrow white privilege (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999). The rejection or refusal to see whiteness produces colorblind racism (McDermott & Samson, 2005). Colorblindness fuels white privilege since it demands that blacks give up on race and become race-free (supposedly like whites). Colorblindness also attempts to eliminate anything that contaminates whiteness (Sullivan, 2006). Therefore, CRT criticizes color-blindness or race neutrality (Loutzenheiser, 2003).

Ignoring race, or rather being color-blind, denotes the idea that recognizing race or being different is shameful or embarrassing (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). In order to combat racism, we must recognize that the ‘let’s just be friends’ mentality is not a solution but rather attributes racism to an interpersonal problem (Kendall, 2006).

With colorblindness discredited as simply another means to perpetuate a system of racism, Kendall (2006) insists that society must change the laws, practices, policies, and the culture in which whiteness dominates as the normative practice. However, to accomplish that, Sullivan (2006) proposes we recognize that privilege is not just a natural phenomenon.

Jenson (2005) believes that if people really wanted racial justice, then public
school funding would be drastically shifted. We must see that white ownership in
economics is uniquely tied to white privilege (Sullivan, 2006). Furthermore, there is a
need to use one’s white privilege to combat racism (Sullivan, 2006). McDermott and
Samson (2005) suggest that we need to move away from simply identifying whiteness
and its privileges, and attempt to use empirical studies to uncover the white racial and
ethnic identity. McKinney (2005) finds that white young people, specifically, need to
move the country towards antiracism.

There needs to be a collective dimension, and whites need to “redefine themselves
as racialised social actors” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 287). It is through further research
and education that whiteness can be understood. Postcolonial perspectives mandate that
white teachers (and researchers) reflect critically on the ways that their own whiteness
directs their teaching/research (Nakayama & Martin, 2007). As identified by Marx and
Pennington (2003), researchers need to recognize that their own whiteness taints their
capability to analyze their subjects’ ability to see their own whiteness. Therefore, it is the
obligation of not only the everyday person to recognize the codes of whiteness that
normalize our society, but researchers’ obligations to see how their own whiteness frames
their ability to conduct research on race.

Additionally, we must displace whiteness as the norm in communication practices
(Nakayama & Martin, 2007). Language becomes a way to judge people according to the
standard white middle class language. White middle class language involves what is
considered to be proper grammar, vocabulary, and communication practices. People are
assessed on how well and how much they speak ‘television’ English according to white
standards (Kendall, 2006). Therefore, in their research study on prospective teachers,
Marx and Pennington (2003) conclude that through a new language around race and Whiteness, that the subjects were able to see how race affected them and the children with whom they worked.

Racist frames of reference are reproduced and modified over time, much like language. Very simply, Figueroa (1991) concludes that if racist frames of reference are constructed, then they can be deconstructed. Critical Race theorists suggest that storytelling is one means to give agency to the oppressed actors. Specifically, to examine dominant ideology, researchers must use storytelling from the perspective of the oppressed (Loutzenheiser, 2003). Counter-storytelling (Delgado, 1995) becomes a means to promote social change in CRT. When dominant truths or norms exist, there is always a desire to undo that truth and the system (Tyson, 2003). Therefore, giving voice to the communities of racially marginalized people is essential to CRT (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Specifically, Tyson (2003) posits that emancipatory research attempts to spur social change for the oppressed.

Researchers have paid much attention to teacher preparation programs and their ability to shape and reshape the way that racism functions in the classroom. Since school can function as a means to maintain/reproduce social inequality, we need to look at how teacher education programs prepare teachers to reinforce the racist frames of reference. Furthermore, we need to develop ways to use teacher education programs as means to combat and deconstruct racist frames of reference (Figueroa, 1991). There is a lack of pedagogical models in preservice programs (Marx & Pennington, 2003) to unpack the assumptions that prospective white teachers bring to the classroom.

Ng (2003) claims that most preservice teachers enter their programs supporting
the ideas of American meritocracy and lack experience interacting with people unlike themselves. Furthermore, many white preservice teachers have difficulty seeing themselves as teachers in urban, classrooms of students of color. Consequently, preservice teachers often have underlying negative opinions of students of color and prefer to work in suburban schools (Ng, 2003). Additionally, Sleeter (1993) posits that the majority of teachers are not only white, but also have had limited experience with people of color. She also argues that teachers bring understandings of race to the public school from their own life experiences.

Preservice teachers are often exposed to diversity through multicultural education. The ways that prospective white teachers learn about multicultural education is primarily from their university, peers, and cooperating teachers (Ng, 2003). Ethnicity and race are often mixed into multiculturalism (Marx & Pennington, 2003). Furumoto (2008) researched university students and their views connected to Chicano/a families. She concluded that Chicano families were objectified based on food, music, and other tangible markers of cultural difference. Furumoto suggests that multicultural education focuses too much on markers, such as physical differences, opposed to power differentials. Research indicates that teacher education programs need to overcome ignorance and stereotypes by the providing the resources to do so (Figueroa, 1991).

Marx and Pennington (2003) use CRT in research with preservice teachers. In their research, they conclude that white preservice teachers need to recognize their own “positionality.” Many of the preservice teachers were disappointed with themselves when they realized the deficit language they used about children of color. Additionally, they claim that whiteness studies/topics have been avoided in preservice programs because
they are considered dangerous or not pertinent to teaching. Essentially, discussions of race make people feel uncomfortable, and as earlier discussed, Whiteness Studies demand that whites recognize their privilege. Since teacher preparation programs are comprised of mostly whites, Whiteness Studies would force these future teachers to face their own privileges. Whiteness studies should be mandatory in teacher preparation programs (Marx & Pennington, 2003), as it may help prepare future teachers to promote equity in public schooling.

**Section Summary**

In this section of the literature, the theoretical framework of Critical White Studies was explored. With biological explanations of race popularly discredited, social constructions of race support dominant theories on racism. The evolution of Critical Legal Studies to Critical Race Theory to Critical White Studies was connected in this section to race in American society and public schools. While Critical Legal Studies developed out of a need to examine how the wealthy were privileged in the legal system, Critical Race Theory developed out of the need to examine how race bestows privilege. Finally, Critical White Studies examines the socially constructed privilege accrued by whites, which subsequently strips other races of privilege. White privilege does not benefit all members of the white race; however, it often grants whites invisible privilege that enables them to navigate the academic, economic, and social networks in America. Whiteness in schools not only places students of color, but also their parents, in positions of inferiority and subordination. Antiracism strategies, such as multicultural education and counter story-telling, are proposed as means to minimize the current effects of whiteness on society and school. Teacher preparation programs are getting specific
attention as potential means to combat racism in school.
Chapter III

Methodology

In this section, I describe the research methods I used to collect and analyze data on first-year white public school teachers and their constructions of parental involvement of students of color. Through a multiple case study design, my goal was to understand how two (2) white first-year teachers from the same teacher preparation program constructed the roles of parents of color in diverse public school settings. My research aim directed at understanding the experiences that first-year white teachers had with parents of color and with other certified staff members regarding parents of color. Additionally, another goal of my study was to use Whiteness Studies as a theoretical framework to learn how these novice teachers adopted or resisted dominant assumptions about parents of color.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use a multiple case study design to understand first-year white teachers’ constructions of parents of color in racially diverse public schools.

Research Questions

In attempt to understand how white teachers come to view parental involvement of students of color, my research focused on two central questions.

1. What do first-year white teachers expect of parents of color?
   a. Specifically, how do first-year white teachers in racially diverse public schools express expectations, ideas, and beliefs about involvement of parents of color?

These expectations included the parents' communication practices, support of students at
home, engagement with the school, and participation in school activities. Essentially, what did first-year white teachers believe about parents of color when it came to school?

b. What are first-year white teachers’ understandings of the roles, successes, failures, and contributions of parents of color? And how do first-year white teachers come to these understandings?

This question focused on the process by which the first-year white teacher came to understand parents of color. It addressed any preexisting ideas about parents of color and the influences of other staff members’ ideas and language surrounding parents of color on the first-year white teacher.

c. How do traditional expectations of parental involvement shape first-year white teachers' understandings of parents of color?

This question addressed if there were any assumptions that first-year white teachers held about parental involvement and how those assumptions influenced their beliefs about parents of color.

d. What are the sources (past and present) of these constructions?

This question focused on understanding how past sources (teacher preparation program and upbringing) and current influences (other teachers and the school culture) aided in the participant’s construction of parents of color.

2. How do first-year white teachers adopt or resist dominant racial assumptions about the parents/guardians of students of color?

According to the available research (Lopez, G.R., 2003), racial assumptions influence teachers in how they interact with parents of color. Some first-year teachers may reject those assumptions and operate outside of the norm, while others may adopt the dominant
thinking. This question attempted to unpack the process by which adoption or rejection occurred in the first-year of teaching.

**Design of the Study**

A qualitative research approach, in the form of a multiple case study method, was used in this study, as it was the most suitable for exploratory research. Qualitative research is not confirmatory research like quantitative research where a hypothesis is being tested, but rather qualitative research is inductive or exploratory in that it attempts to understand how and perhaps "why" something happens. Furthermore, qualitative research is broad and holistic, allowing for dynamic phenomena (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Therefore, the pragmatic and interpretive nature (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) of qualitative research best fit my study on first-year white teachers’ constructions of parents of color.

Specifically, case study research design was used to gather data in this study. Case study research can be either quantitative or qualitative, however, for the purpose of this study the case studies were purely qualitative (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Yin (1994) identifies case studies as being appropriate for research that is asking how a contemporary event is occurring without a need to control behavior. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). This research study attempted to unpack the ways that first-year white teachers in a real-life context (i.e., the public school) were actively constructing the involvement of parents of color.

“Case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not
typically present in more analytic reporting formats” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 164). The term case, as an object of study, is a “bounded system” (Creswell, 1998). “System” indicates that the parts act within a specific environment and “bounded” indicates that there are clear boundaries that define what the case is and is not (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). A case may be as wide as a campus or as focused as a person (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The boundary of this case was clear. In this research study, the case was the individual first-year white teacher from a specific teacher preparation program working in a racially diverse public school. Inclusive in the individual white first-year teacher case was any information or insight gathered through the experiences of that person. In addition, to contextualize each case, publicly available data was collected from the teaching site. “Because case study researchers define a case as a bounded system it should not be surprising that they study how the system operates. As a result, they are interested in holistic description” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 328). Therefore, this research study used individual teachers to develop a more holistic description of the phenomenon of how race and parental involvement function in public schools.

To draw stronger conclusions about the phenomenon of first-year white teachers and involvement of parents of color, a multiple case study design was used. A multiple case study, or rather a collective case study (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), may have the intrinsic goal of understanding a specific case; however, the multiple case study’s goal is to understand something more general. While one goal of this study was to understand the specific cases, the multiple case study design goal was to gain insight into the research questions by gathering data from two cases within the larger research project
As the researcher, I embarked to overcome the obstacles that case study methodology may present and stress the benefits of this research design in addressing the research questions. The case study approach has been criticized for researcher bias and lacking generalizability. Yin (1994) addresses these issues by stressing the importance of researcher responsibility and by explaining that a single case may face the same problems as a single scientific experiment. Therefore, using a multiple case study approach increased the transferability of the findings. Specifically, the multiple case study is criticized with the depth versus breadth argument. It is suggested that the researcher sacrifices the depth of his/her analysis for less in depth comparative findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). However, benefits arise from the multiple case study design. For the purpose of this study, the multiple case study’s benefit generated robust data. Furthermore, multiple case studies are often received as more compelling (Yin, 1994) and build greater confidence in the study’s conclusions (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Since the purpose of this research study was to understand first-year teachers’ experiences involving constructions of parents of color, a quantitative approach would not have been suitable. Furthermore, given the lack of current research on first-year white teachers and the involvement of parents of color, exploratory research in the form of a multiple case study was most effective in drawing attention to an area in need of additional research. This research study was bound by time (the teachers’ first year) and place (two racially diverse public schools), involved various forms of data collection (semi-structured interviews, collection of field documents, and participant reported data), and attempted to understand the experiences of multiple individuals. The qualitative
methodology of the multiple case study design was most suiting to the nature and purpose of this study.

**Sampling**

“Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 156). For the purpose of this study, my sample was two first-year white teachers. Two teachers allowed a denser collection of data that allowed for triangulated data. My sample was drawn using the nonrandom sampling technique of purposive sampling. This nonrandom technique is when a researcher is interested in specific characteristics and attempts to locate individuals who fit those characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Since I was interested in first-year white teachers, purposive sampling was the most effective technique.

In the summer of 2009, I attempted to obtain the May 2009 graduate list from what will be identified as Mid-Atlantic State University’s five-year teacher education program director. The director denied the request and stated it was a breach of privacy. I explained that its own Institutional Research Board (IRB) had approved the entire research study, including the solicitation process. It appeared that the director was reluctant to share any information because he might have believed that the study was an evaluation of his program. At the suggestion of the IRB office, I contacted the university’s Alumni Services who were likely to have had a mailing list. Alumni Services was extremely helpful and simply required the IRB approval page and an e-mail verification from the dissertation chairperson.

I contacted Alumni Services who provided me with a mailing list for the graduates of the five-year teaching program. The list was in an Excel spreadsheet with
the names, addresses, and majors of the graduates. I disregarded any person who only majored in elementary education, as he/she would fall outside of the limitations of the study. At that point, there were approximately 200 possible candidates. In August, I sent a letter (See Appendix A) explaining the purpose of my project (self-disclosure), detailed the requirements for participation, and included a self-addressed stamped envelope/e-mail address to contact me. Potential participants were asked to identify his/her race and employment placement (town and grade).

The first mailing only solicited about a dozen responses with only one yes. As the researcher, I sent a duplicate mailing to everyone from whom I had not yet heard. The second mailing solicited two more yes responses and many nos. Two of the yeses were via e-mail and one sent back the reply card in the mail. Of those who responded no, almost all provided a reason. Several stated that they were not white or were working in all white districts. However, the majority stated that they had been unable to find a job or had taken substitute positions because there were no openings. Most expressed disappointment or regret for not being able to participate. The poor economy (as discussed in Chapter IV) most likely affected their abilities to obtain full-time teaching positions, and consequently eliminated them as potential participants. Responders who did not fulfill the criteria were notified that their participation would not be needed and their responses were discarded.

I responded to all three potential participants via e-mail to confirm the school districts in which they would be working. I researched the district data using the New Jersey Department of Education school report cards as well as census data to confirm that each school fit the qualification criteria. I then e-mailed the candidates to set up meetings
to sign the informed consent form and to conduct the first round of interviews.

My subject pool was drawn from a particular population (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using a racially and educationally homogeneous sample, I used two (2) volunteer graduates of Mid-Atlantic State University. Participants were chosen based on meeting the study’s criteria for research participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Both volunteers were self-identified first-year white teachers who would be working in diverse public schools after graduating from the same teacher preparation program. The choice of similarly-raced participants helped establish if codes of whiteness shape their perceptions of parents of color and the ways in which novice teachers involve parents of diverse communities. Furthermore, participants in this multiple case study shared similar educational backgrounds (masters degrees) from the same teacher preparation program. These similarities increased the chance that subjects would bring similar educational beliefs and assumptions to their first teaching job.

Additionally, participants worked in similar racially diverse public schools. For the purpose of this study, racially diverse schools were identified using the New Jersey State Report Card regarding ethnic composition. In order to be labeled as a diverse school, the racial composition had to be at least one third black and/or Latino. A population of at least one third black/Latino allowed the participants enough experiences and interactions with parents of color to participate in the research. For the purpose of this study, the definition of student of color was isolated to the black and Latino populations. Black included both Caribbean blacks and African-Americans. Latino included Central American Latinos and Caribbean Latinos.

Furthermore, participants had to teach on the 6-12 grade level. Data analysis and
possible conclusions were more credible by limiting the possibility that the conclusions could have been based on other differences. Eliminating deflectors, such as school level differences, allowed common themes regarding first-year white teachers and parents of color to emerge more clearly and convincingly. Essentially, parental involvement may vary from elementary school to middle/high school levels, therefore focusing on a particular context reduced the chance of drawing false conclusions.

**Teacher preparation program.** Both participants (as per the qualification criteria) graduated from the same five-year teacher education program. The five-year program is a continuous bachelors and masters degree program that results in teacher certification in a specific subject area. The five-year program is a part of the university’s school of education. The school of education’s mission statement stresses its focus on improving and enhancing education in order to empower people to function in a diverse world. It emphasizes faculty who engage in interdisciplinary, purposeful research, a diverse student body, and programs that encourage reform to learning, teaching and leadership policies.

Students begin taking education courses during their sophomore or junior year, but are not officially admitted to the program until the spring of junior year. In order to be admitted, students must take the Introduction to Education course, complete 75 credits, complete the majority of general education requirements, write a proficient personal statement, submit a full transcript, submit three letters of recommendation, and meet the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score qualifications.

As an undergraduate, students must take six education courses that count towards their bachelor degrees. In addition, students must complete their undergraduate general
requirements and major requirements to graduate with their bachelors at the end of four years. The summer following their fourth year (and the awarding of their bachelors degrees), students take a sequence of education courses. Their fifth year includes a student teaching internship in the fall and additional coursework. The fifth year requires 30 credit hours and culminates with the awarding of a masters degree in the spring. Students must complete a portfolio, take the state health exam, and pass the PRAXIS as the final requirements for teacher certification. Students are then able to apply for their teacher certification in their designated areas.

The course sequence depends on the certification area. For example, students who desire certification in science will have to take content courses directly related to teaching science. However, there are core courses that all students must take. All students take common core education courses (such as Introduction to Education, cultural diversity, classroom organization, special education, assessment/measurement, and educational psychology).

*Introduction to Education* focuses on learning and teaching perspectives, perceptions of teachers, and a field experience. *Educational Psychology* focuses on learning and thinking theories. *Introduction to Special Education* investigates the different types of disabilities of children. The cultural diversity course focuses on the diversity of school populations, with an emphasis on improving academic success and interaction. *Assessment and Measurement* provides an overview of evaluation strategies and grading principles. *Classroom Organization* focuses on classroom management and discipline. The full-time internship is a fifteen-week student teaching experience where the teacher candidate is required to teach three courses under the direction of a
cooperating teacher.

**Participant 1.** Participant 1 (who will be referred to by the alias Lindsay) taught science, specifically a freshman-required course and a senior elective at Crimson Rock High School. She grew up in a relatively upper-middle class white district and attended a university that is diverse in terms of race, religion, and class. Lindsay graduated in May 2009 with a Masters degree in education. She was in her early 20s when the study began and identified herself as a white woman. When she accepted her teaching position in 2009, she moved to Crimson Rock.

**Participant 2.** Participant 2 (who will be referred to by the alias of Natalie) taught English as a Second Language in the middle school system in Mapleton. Natalie was offered a job in the same district where she had completed her student teaching. She was a travel teacher who worked in two different middle schools (one of which pulled students from the third middle school). The two middle schools will be referred to by the aliases of Carson Middle School and Wright Middle School. Natalie graduated in May 2009 with a Masters degree in education. Natalie lived in Mapleton during the year 2009-2010; however, she was not raised in that district. She was a self-identified white woman in her early 20s when the study began.

**Participant 3.** Participant 3 was in his late twenties/early thirties. He had already obtained bachelors and masters degrees, and had worked in a private school in New England before attending the teacher preparation program at the university. He had completed his student teaching and a long-term substitute position before being offered a full time position in same district. Participant 3 signed the informed consent form and participated in the first interview. At that point, he unofficially withdrew from the study.
He did not answer any journal questions. He would not reply to e-mails or phone messages that I left him regarding his continued participation in the study. After several failed attempts to reach out to the participant, I terminated his participation. I decided that his limited participation in the study was not profound enough to include in the analysis. His one interview would have been an isolated piece of data that would not have followed the data collection or analysis processes.

**Data Collection**

As with many case studies, my research depended on data collected from semi-structured interviews, archival information pertaining to school policy and parental involvement, and participant notes/e-mails/journals about experiences with parents (Creswell, 1998). Since the focus of this study was first-year teachers, the collection of data took place over one academic school year. Case studies do not have to take a long time and this time-frame fit the purpose of the study (Yin, 1994).

**Interviews.** Interviews are one of the most important sources of information in a case study. While interviews can be formal and open-ended (Yin, 1994), for the purpose of this study, interviews were semi-structured allowing for guidance and shared conversation areas with other participants’ interviews, but allowing for flexibility so important issues naturally occurred. Qualitative research interviews are to be interactive and situational. Researchers should ask, listen, and interpret (Mason, 2002).

Each participant was individually interviewed a total of four times (one interview at the beginning of the year, two during the school year, and one after the end of the academic year). In these interviews, participants were asked to reflect and share perceptions and experiences related to parents. In-depth interviewing reinforces the belief
that “participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the
participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic
perspective)” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). However, the interviews were semi-
structured to ensure that interviews addressed the research questions of this project.
Furthermore, I carefully avoided abstract questions that might not have revealed what the
interviewee was experiencing or really what I was asking (Mason, 2002). The purpose of
this data source was to elicit information that directly connected to my research
questions. As the interviewer, I had some control over the direction of the interview,
which made this data source rich in addressing the research questions of this project.

The first interview occurred at the beginning of the school year. During this
interview, I tried to establish trust and build rapport with the participant. The intent of the
interview was to gather data on established beliefs about parental involvement, parents of
color, and expectations for their experiences during their first year of teaching. I gathered
information on the ways that the subject's teacher preparation program did/did not shape
her expectations of parents. Questions also led into discussions of the participant's
personal expectations for her interaction with all parents and specifically with parents of
color, including how, when, and the frequency of the contact with parents. Participants
were asked to discuss what they believed would be the school district's role in
communicating with parents. I also asked each participant to discuss his/her perspective
on her identity as a white teacher. The first interview served as a foundation to which
later data was analyzed to note any changes in thoughts, constructions, and perceptions of
parents of color. It was important to establish a base understanding of the participant's
preexisting beliefs and ideas about parents of color at the beginning of her first year of
teaching.

The second interview occurred in early winter. The amount of time between Interview 1 and Interview 2 allowed at least one marking period, parent conferences, and back-to-school night to have taken place. The focus of this interview was to gather data on initial experiences and interactions with parents in formal settings (i.e., parent conferences, back-to-school nights, contact with parents via e-mail or phone), as well as to gather information on informal experiences surrounding parental involvement (i.e., teacher-talk in faculty rooms, mentors’ advice on particular situations, parental reactions to report cards). Questions asked the participant to reflect on and share accounts of interactions with all parents, and specifically with parents of color. Participants were asked to draw conclusions on what they had noticed about parents of color. The second interview gave participants the opportunity to discuss other colleagues, including their mentors. These questions provided information on the culture of the school and revealed if there was a shared perspective on parents of color. The second interview (as well as the third and fourth interviews) focused on eliciting discussions of the first-year teacher's conflicts and dilemmas surrounding parental involvement, specifically with parents of color.

The third interview took place in the spring of the participants’ first year of teaching. At that point, midterms had already taken place, failing students had been identified, and spring conferences had taken place. The focus of the third interview was similar to the second interview’s general content; however, more focus was given to successful/failing students and parents’ roles in that success. The interview discussion revolved around the role of parents in the academic and behavioral success of their
students. Participants were asked to share examples/stories of challenging interactions with parents of color. As with the second interview, the third interview asked the participant to reflect on her colleagues and mentor teacher. Similarities and differences with white parents were also addressed as a way to understand the first-year white teacher's construction of parents of color.

The final interview focused on reflections of participants’ interactions with parents of color, shared/opposed beliefs with colleagues, and plans connected to parents of color for the following year. Questions focused on the conclusions that the first-year teacher made about parents and specifically about parents of color. Each participant was asked to discuss how colleagues and the school (as an institution) influenced her beliefs about the involvement of parents of color. Participants were also given the opportunity to share future goals and suggestions for involving parents of color. The final interview allowed for changes in the participant's language surrounding parental involvement to emerge. In all four interviews, I treated the interview as a site of knowledge construction in which both the interviewer and the interviewee were participants (Mason, 2002).

**Publically available sources of data.** Marshall and Rossman (2006) emphasize that background data particular to the context help shape the research project; therefore, I collected data from all available sources that might have proved beneficial to my analysis and conclusions.

**Handbooks, policies, and strategic action plans.** I obtained the policy/handbooks for each district. These are publically accessible documents. Both districts offered detailed expectations, policies, and procedures in their respective handbooks regarding student, teacher, administrator, and district protocol. Crimson Rock had a separate
handbook for teachers and another for students. Both handbooks were obtained. The handbooks were seen as important data in understanding the experience of new teachers in this district and the relationships that they developed with parents of color. The handbooks revealed the formal intended vision of the district, its parents, students, and teachers. The teacher handbook was approximately 100 pages in length, and offered an understanding of the district’s expectations of teachers. The teacher handbook outlined the primary roles and responsibilities of the teacher. Additionally, it explained the support services available to teachers. For the purpose of this project, the teacher’s handbook functioned as a means to analyze the formal structure of the district. This written policy was the district’s ideal image of a functioning school. Analyzing the document as the district’s intended vision of a successful school, allowed me, as the researcher, to conclude how important race, parents, and new teachers are to the district’s intended functioning. The teacher’s handbook had a table of contents that essentially detailed the important areas of a teacher’s professional obligations and conduct. These areas include: absences, punctuality, lesson plans, dress code, finances, discipline referrals, liability, schedules, grading, reporting child abuse, fire drill procedures, supplies, announcements, clubs/activities, facilities usage, field trips, overall attendance, parking lot rules, evaluation, and discipline.

The Crimson Rock Student Handbook was approximately 50 pages in length and began with a brief letter to students and parents. In the letter, the superintendent explained that the handbook contained current policies, but the district reserved the right to add new policies if necessary. The table of contents contained areas such as athletic participation, maps, bell schedules, locker usage, counseling services, standardized
testing procedures, code of conduct, calendars, telephone directory, mission statements, and health related concerns.

Mapleton School District offered a comprehensive handbook broken up into six major sections. These categories identified roles, responsibilities, obligations, rights, protocol and access in each of the following areas: community, administration, operations, personnel, students, and instruction. The entire document is approximately 500 pages in length broken down into about 125 subsections. Each subsection included legal (NJSA) references to support the specific policy and/or procedure. This single document essentially outlined the district’s rules, regulations, expectations, and procedures for administrators, teachers, and students.

Additionally, Mapleton School District had a student code of conduct that was approximately fifty pages in length and outlined the expected behaviors of students. While this document was intended for students, it had direct effect on teachers and parents, and thus was used as a source of data in the analysis.

The researcher considers the handbooks as important documents for the purpose of this project because it very formally revealed the intended culture of the school. While the image that the handbook projected might not have been a reality in the actual school, the district wanted to believe that its school operated in the outlined manner. Analyzing this information separately and then in conjunction with the participants’ lived experiences revealed conflicting ideologies and practices.

The handbooks included the individual school policies regarding parental contact, parent conferences, and parental involvement. I gathered any information pertaining to mandatory parent-contact (i.e., teacher websites), faculty handbook directives, and
district/school vision statements related to parent/family involvement. I gathered data on the types of support that the school offered teachers/new teachers, specifically looking for support on race/parents/community involvement. Additionally, I collected any available information on new teacher induction/development that connected to race and/or parental involvement.

I was able to access the strategic action plans for the Mapleton School district. It appeared that Mapleton viewed a strategic action plan as a focused, goal-oriented program that used evidence and responsible parties to accomplish specific tasks that within benchmark goals. The district created strategic action plans for the district-at-large, inclusive of each individual school. Each plan included specific goals and markers of achieving each goal.

**District and school websites.** The district and school websites were also used as a source of data that revealed the kinds of support that the school offered parents (i.e., translation services, pm access to teachers/administrators). The district and school webpages were grouped together. In order to understand the environment of the participant, I, as the researcher, believed that the district and school influenced the participant’s experience.

**Demographic information.** As discussed in later Chapter IV, I also collected demographic information from the New Jersey census and the NJ Department of Education to contextualize how the public school conveyed information to their communities (i.e., translated publications/websites, internet availability depending on economic status of the community). I should note that the Parent Teacher Organization was excluded as a source of data since it is a formalized organization. While it worked in
conjunction with the school, it would have changed the site of this study.

**Self-reported Journals.** From the participants, I gathered the racial composition of their classes. I tried to collect any documents that they shared with parents. Participants were asked to e-mail/contact me at any time with any experiences that they had had involving parents. Since I realized that first-year teachers might become overwhelmed by the workload and also that subjects might not have known what information to e-mail me, I also set up monthly e-mail reactions. Participants were asked to respond to two (2) open-ended topics each month. Several times, participants fell behind in their responses, and in some cases, answered three or four questions in a single month. Topics all directly addressed instances/issues relating to parental involvement or perceptions (either theirs or those articulated by others) of parents. This format allowed the opportunity for participants to story-tell, which may serve as a rich source of data. In the e-mail journals, each participant was asked to reflect on the racial composition of her contact with parents, the representation of parents of color at school functions, interactions with colleagues concerning parents, her perceptions of how being white affected her role as a teacher, expectations of the school for parental involvement, and goals for her second year. The e-mail journal topics were focused enough to draw comparable responses from both participants, however, it was broad enough to allow natural story-telling to occur. The purpose of the e-mail journals was to help reduce any hedged responses (which might have occurred during face-to-face interviewing). It allowed a more open response to sensitive issues and allowed for triangulation with other data sources.

It is suggested that while conducting a multiple case study that the researcher
gather any and all data that connects to the research questions and connects back to the existing literature. Data may be collected from observations, interviews, documents, questionnaires, etc (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Therefore, for the purpose of this multiple case study, I gathered any and all data through interviews, documents, and participants’ journal responses.

**Data Analysis**

My analysis was grounded in Whiteness Studies, so that I, as the researcher, could focus on the central issues of “social institutions and their transformation through interpreting the meanings of social life; the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles; and a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities” (Creswell, 1998, p. 80). Specifically, using Whiteness Studies, a derivative of Critical Race Theory, as my theoretical framework, I coded documents and interviews for themes that emerged, related to issues of racial assumptions, norms, and practices. Specific themes were not pre-established, but my research questions helped guide the coding. The areas of expectations of parents, codes of whiteness, and experiences with parents most directly related to my research questions. Since multiple cases allow researchers to reach conclusions about a certain phenomenon, I first constructed an overall picture of the cases, then analyzed each case separately, and finally drew conclusions (Strauss, 1987).

There is not one single format of case study reporting (Creswell, 1998); however, case study researchers must ask themselves good questions, listen well, be flexible in thought and opportunity, have a strong handle on the issues of the study, and be unbiased (Yin, 1994). Therefore, I followed the seven (7) basic procedures for data analysis in a qualitative research study (organizing the data; immersion in the data; generating
categories and themes; coding the data; offering interpretations through analytic memos; searching for alternative understandings; and writing the report) (see Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

To analyze my data, I segmented (divided data into analytical units) and coded (categorized those segments). After I segmented, I coded the data, adding each new code to a master list of codes, which detailed the name and description of the code. Coding names were abstract enough to allow categories to emerge (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). I, as the researcher, used inductive codes to analyze the data. Inductive codes are created as the researcher examines the data, opposed to a priori codes, which are pre-established before the study begins. Inductive coding was more appropriate for my study than pre-established, a priori, codes because I was not trying to replicate previous research nor did I want to limit my findings to pre-existing assumptions of my research. For the inductive codes, I used both emic terms (i.e., using terms from the participants themselves) and social scientific terms to which researchers would be more accustomed (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Furthermore, I tried to maintain high intracoder reliability, in which I demonstrate consistency and logic in my coding (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

After the completion of the school year, each source of data was read, coded, and analyzed separately. The topics of parental involvement, first-year teachers, and race were kept in mind while previewing the material before coding. However, the usage of an inductive coding process helped manifest unrelated codes that later were decided to have no significant influence on the research study. Five major codes were developed as a result of the coding process. Parents, diversity/race, teachers, language, and economics
became the large codes into which smaller coding fell.

All of the raw data was separated into its individual pages and identified with a post-it at the top of the page. The coding process began with a cold reading of all of the materials. Using the broad areas indentified in the literature review (parental involvement, race, and new teachers), codes were assigned a particular color. The next step was to highlight whole pages, subject areas, links, words, and/or phrases that connected to the emerging codes. The highlighter color corresponded with the post-it note placed on the right margin to flag its significance. This process was color-coded with a hand written key/chart to keep track of the codes. As the coding of the preliminary areas, two codes were added and one was adapted. Language (references, links, access for non-English speakers) and economics (references, links, information on the economic problems/issues/opportunities for the school, students, parents, and/or community) emerged as significant codes to help understand the district and possibly the experience of the participant as a new member of that district. The decision to broaden ‘new teachers’ into ‘teachers’ (designating a subcategory for new teachers) was based on the desire to reflect the influence that teachers in that particular district might have had on a new teacher. Coding and analyzing data for all teachers helped understand the expectations, influences, positioning, and access that teachers had in the district. A new teacher is also just a teacher, so coding for teachers made more sense than just new teacher. Excluding information about teachers in general would have eliminated possibly significant information in the final analysis.

Room was left for differences in coding between Crimson Rock and Mapleton, however, the researcher found that the significant codes remained the same. While the
large codes remained the same for both districts, it is important to note that smaller codes and nuances emerged that later influenced the analysis of the district information. Additionally, the emphasis and frequency of the codes varied between the two districts.

After coding, I focused on categories, relationships, and themes that emerged. I categorized and subcategorized codes. “Categories are the basic building blocks of qualitative data analysis because qualitative researchers make sense of their data by identifying and studying the categories that appear in their data” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 434). From those categories, I tried to identify relationships. Relationships in qualitative research simply means “connections between things” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 437) opposed to the quantitative definition, which is simply the connection between variables.

For the purpose of my study, the initial interviews were coded and were not analyzed with the interviews throughout the school year, nor with the end of the year interviews. Each of these times, the interviews were coded and analyzed separately. Only after the completion of the yearlong study, were the analyses of each interview interpreted as a whole. I established patterns (categories of correspondence) before developing naturalistic generalizations (conclusions from which people can learn) (Creswell, 1998). Using content analysis, or rather the analysis of raw materials (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), I coded all written materials (i.e., e-mails, documents, websites, vision statements, handbooks, district action plans, monthly journals). Content analysis was conducted separately before synthesizing the findings with the interviews. Additionally, each participant’s experiences was reported and analyzed individually before being analyzed and interpreted in the summary section.
As the researcher, I made all attempts to respect the integrity of the participants’ experiences in reporting my findings. In some sections, shorter direct quotes were mixed with paraphrases. It is important to note that, as the researcher, I chose to paraphrase for increased fluency and to avoid disagreement in verb tense. I remained committed to reporting the participants’ experiences as they reported them to me. Furthermore, in order to protect the identity of the participants, I did not directly quote any data that could be traced (i.e., information from publically available sources). While direct quoting of those data sources may have enhanced the study, I could not violate my ethical obligations to the participants.

Qualitative research is often criticized on reliability and validity. Therefore, I avoided such positivist terminology and used Lincoln and Guba’s term of “trustworthiness” when discussing the data and analysis (Creswell, 1998). To increase the “trustworthiness” of my research project, records of raw data, thematic organizations, keys to thematic coding, and data analysis were carefully maintained. Furthermore, the “trustworthiness” of my study rested upon the triangulation of my data and the time span (Creswell, 1998). Specifically, the collection of data across the entire first-year experience of the participants helped ensure that the data more accurately reflected first-year white teachers’ perspectives on the involvement of parents of color. Furthermore, triangulated data from different sources were used to corroborate my findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Triangulation helped ensure that my conclusions were grounded in converged information (Creswell, 1998) opposed to isolated findings that might have led to inaccurate conclusions. Case study inquiry “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as
one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2004, p. 13). Through a process of triangulation, multiple sources of evidences developed converging lines of inquiry. Data sources, investigators, perspectives, and methods can all be triangulated (Yin, 1994) in order to corroborate findings. Methods triangulation and data triangulation helped increase the validity of this study. Through using multiple methods and various sources of data (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), I increased the “trustworthiness” (validity) of this study. Descriptive validity (accuracy of the reported accounts), interpretive validity (accuracy of meanings attached to the participants’ experiences), and theoretical validity (credibility of theoretical explanation) (Johnson & Christensen, 2000) were all of great importance to my role as researcher. Finally, member checking took place. Participants were asked to review my analysis of their interviews and journals. Member checking helped ensure that the conclusions that I made were reflective of the participants' experiences and increased the interpretive validity of my findings.

Researcher bias is a common criticism of qualitative research because it is suggested that researchers may simply find that for which they are looking. To limit researcher bias, I engaged in reflexivity (reflection on my potential predisposed biases), triangulation (multiple data sources and methods), negative-case sampling (specifically looking for examples that disprove my explanations) (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), and member checking. Researchers should challenge patterns of codes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and account for alternate perspectives in order to avoid researcher bias (Yin 1994).
Researcher Positionality

Since qualitative case study design is often criticized for researcher bias (Yin, 1994), it is important for me, as the researcher, to disclose my own positionality. My interest clearly lies in educational equity, which as a white woman who grew up in an exclusively white, extremely wealthy town may be surprising. My elementary years were spent in a small, racially/economically homogenous public school (100 students total in K-8). I split my middle school/high school years between the local public school and an international school overseas. In my US public high school (that accepted descending districts, which were all wealthy, primarily white towns, except for one), I was tracked into all honors classes (which clearly had no students from the racially, economically diversified town). However, in my overseas education, I became the racial minority and, therefore, race began to matter. In college and graduate school, I became embarrassed about the privileges that I had in life. However, I thought that my privileges were simply due to socioeconomic status, not my white identity.

My interest in educational equity did not begin until I became a public school teacher. I have spent the majority of my teaching career in a racially and economically diverse district. Very quickly, the have and the have-nots became visible, as I would often be the only white person in a room of black and Latino kids placed in the lower tracks. I began to wonder how my experience with public education could be so grossly different than the experiences of my students. I quit the district, as I felt confused and uncomfortable with what was happening. I went and worked in a wealthy, all-white/Asian district for a year where I did not have to deal with the consequences of race or wealth. However, I regretted my choice when I realized that running away only made
me a perpetuator of inequity. I returned to my original district and switched the focus of my studies to racial equity in the public school system.

Thus, I approach this project with clear ideas about institutional racism and acknowledgement of my own race and its ensuing privileges. Clearly, my research interest lies in understanding how new white teachers in racially diverse public schools encounter the same challenges/situations that I experienced. Through recognizing my own past experiences and current ideologies, I believe that I was able to listen and report the experiences of my participants without judgment. I was well aware of my identity before, during, and after this project; however, I did not let my identity re-voice the experiences of my participants or redefine the findings of the study.

**Ethical Protection of Participants**

Research ethics, or rather the guiding principles that establish moral goals and identify conflicts in values, should be strictly adhered to (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Following the principles of informed consent, or rather the choice to participate in a research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), I informed the participants in the research study of the nature of the study, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and the requirements of the study before the study began. Additionally, participants were informed that their participation was purely voluntary and they could leave the study at any time without fear of penalty (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Participants were asked to sign consent forms indicating that they had been fully informed of the nature of the study.

Confidentiality was practiced in this study. Given that some people may regard the research questions and nature of this study as controversial, it was best to protect the
participants. As Yin (1994) stresses there may be need to protect the sites and participants of a case study especially if studying a controversial topic. The study’s theoretical framework of Whiteness Studies faces harsh opposition and its assertions may make people uncomfortable. Therefore, confidentiality was ensured. Names of participants and schools were changed. While audio recording of interviews took place, aliases were used to identify the participant in all coding and reporting. Additionally, participants were given pseudonyms and no school names or towns were identified in the analysis. Data that would have revealed the district was omitted or generalized (i.e., demographic statistics were given as a range opposed to a specific identifiable figure). No one outside of me as the researcher knows the true identity of the participants or their school districts (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Deception, or rather the misleading of participants, did not occur in this study. It would not have served any purpose or advantage to the findings to engage in deception (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Furthermore, participants were debriefed after the conclusion of the study, in which they had the opportunity to ask any questions that they had about the nature of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).  

Limitations

No research project is free from limitations. Limitations derive from both the methodology and the theoretical framework (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A researcher cannot study the entire universe, so he/she must choose a site or sample of focus (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As with other qualitative research studies, my research was “situated in a specific context” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Accordingly, my research design faced limitations in the areas of reliance on participants and sample size. I had to
depend on the participants to report instances of parental contact and experiences with the school’s expectations regarding parental involvement. My research had to depend on first-hand accounts from first-year teachers. I had to rely on the participants to relay pertinent information regarding parental contact. Unfortunately, while I was direct in my expectations, the pertinence of the revealed data was up to the discretion of the participant. Additionally, given the demands of the first-year teacher, it was possible that the participant might have been too overwhelmed/distracted to fully commit to note important interactions with parents and other colleagues. My status as a full-time teacher myself also limited the findings of my study. First, due to my own job demands, I was not able to directly observe the participants within their school settings. Documents and interviews, opposed to direct observation, served as the sources of my data. Furthermore, as a veteran teacher, I had to rely on building trust and confidence from the participants to share information with me without the fear of being judged by someone who they perceived as more experienced.

Furthermore, the sample size of first-year teachers might have limited my findings or produced inaccurate conclusions based on the limited data I was able to collect. Additionally, since this multiple case study used a small sample, it may not accurately represent the larger macrolevel phenomena relating to novice white teachers’ experiences with parents of color. The localization and particular attributes of the case studies must be considered as limiting.

Summary

Given the current inequitable educational opportunities that students of color experience, it is essential to study the components of schooling that affect equity.
Parental involvement and teachers’ reactions to parents may shape the experiences of students of color. Dominant ideologies may influence the ways that teachers construct parental involvement; however, there are spaces in which dominant ideologies can be resisted. First-year teachers may provide greater agency than veteran teachers. By studying first-year teachers, the process of how teachers adopt or reject the dominant ideologies may be unveiled. The purpose of this study focused on answering two research questions. First, how do first-year white teachers in racially diverse public schools construct involvement of parents of color? And secondly, how do first-year white teachers adopt or resist dominant racial assumptions about parents of color?

As explored in the literature review, this research study rested on three areas of educational research: parental involvement, novice teachers, and Critical Whiteness Studies. Novice teachers, specifically first-year teachers, face the overwhelming challenge of applying university training, making sense of preconceived notions of effective teaching, and socializing with other certified staff. The demands of the first year of teaching influence many new teachers to exist in survival mode. In this survival mode, paperwork and classroom management often take higher importance over other areas of education, such as parental involvement. Parental involvement is commonly accepted as beneficial to the functioning of schools and the success of students. Definitions of effective parental involvement often operate with underlying assumptions about race. These underlying assumptions are driven by what Critical Whiteness Studies identify as the white norm. Parents who do not adopt or adapt to the white ways of the world are marginalized from school and/or are blamed by the staff as the reason for student failure.

The methodology was established for this research project as a multiple case
study. The sampling included two first-year white teachers from the same teacher preparation program, working in 6-12 public schools with a racial composition of at least one-third black/Latino. Data were collected from district-available information concerning parents, semi-structured interviews, and journal responses. Over one academic school year, data was collected and analyzed, with the aim of drawing transferable conclusions about the experiences of first-year white teachers’ constructions of parents of color.
Chapter IV

Economic and Demographic Context of the Study

To understand the context of this study, it is important to review the economic dimensions of the times. Both participants were forced to enter a workforce in a time of national recession and specifically an educational budget crisis in New Jersey. As later discussed, the findings of this study consider how economics affected the experiences of the participants in their ability to accept or reject dominant ideologies concerning parents of color. Additionally, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences, an overview of their districts are provided in this chapter. It is important to note that both participants worked and lived in their respective districts.

Overview of the Economic Context

The current economic recession had a profound effect on education across the nation, and New Jersey during the 2009-2010 school year was no exception. Not only did the economic conditions lead to job cuts in the private sector, but it also had a dramatic impact on the availability of jobs in public schools. Hundreds of applicants struggled and fought for the same teaching position. The competition for teaching jobs increased greatly over the two years prior to this study, and most likely would continue to follow that pattern. Almost all districts suffered severe budget cuts that resulted in job cuts and increased competition with ‘fired’ teachers joining the job search with new graduates. The lowest number of budgets passed for the 2010-2011 school year, with more than half of the budgets voted down by district constituents (Gewertz, 2010).

As the researcher, I anticipated that the economy could have a heightened effect on the first-year teacher’s experience. Since the research already supports that in a stable
economy, the new teacher is concerned with job security (Huling, 2006), a bad economy would increase the stress felt by a first-year teacher.

The Great Recession of the Late 2000s

The economic recession in the United States officially began in December 2007 (Maxwell, 2010). At the time of this study, it was suggested that several more years would pass before states would see any kind of revenue recovery (Maxwell, 2010). President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to provide economic-stimulus money (Maxwell, 2010). Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, $100 billion in federal stimulus money was allocated over a two-year period (Robelen, 2009). Despite the federal-stimulus money, the economy was greatly affecting the educational system (Robelen, 2009). As stimulus money began to recede, states were forced to evaluate their growing budget gaps (Maxwell, 2010).

President Obama’s most recent plan, to the time of this study, included a 7.5% increase in the Education Department’s discretionary budget to $49.7 billion. Consequently, a $3 billion increase would have been included for k-12 education (mostly to competitive grants) (Klein, 2010). However, some Democrats argued that Obama’s plan to increase funding to competitive grants would have made it more difficult on schools to receive needed resources during this tough economic time (Klein, 2010).

In 2007, the unemployment rate for college graduates (under the age of 25) was 5.4%, however, by March 2010, the rate was 9% (Quillen, 2010). The class of 2010 was predicted to have the most difficult time finding jobs than any other class in the thirty years prior. Not since 1983 had the job market been as daunting (Quillen, 2010). There remained the belief that the recession would increase college enrollment and produce
more educated, skilled citizens. However, Quillin (2010) argues that there had been less than a 2% increase of college enrollment between 2008 and 2010, dismissing any belief in a recession-driven surge (2010).

In winter of 2009, “states [were] struggling to eliminate nearly $50 billion in budget gaps this fiscal year, on top of the roughly $40 billion they [had] already cut out of their spending plans” (McNeil, 2009b, paragraph 2). Collectively, state revenue shortfalls had grown to $143 billion by July of 2009 (Robelen, 2009). In the middle of 2009’s fiscal year, more than a dozen states had to make cuts to education (McNeil, 2009b). Thirty-one states in 2009 suffered from a collective $30 billion budget gap. Most of those states had already made cuts to precollegiate education. Thirteen of those states had already cut $3.6 billion (not reflective in the $30 billion gap) midyear (McNeil, 2009a).

As lawmakers designed 2010 fiscal budgets, 34 states collectively faced $84.3 billion in shortfalls. Ranging from shortfalls between 18%-37%, with Arizona, California, Hawaii, Louisiana, Nevada, New York, and Washington facing the greatest budget problems (McNeil, 2009b).

Not since the early 1980s’ recession had governors had to make such significant cuts to public education (McNeil, 2009a). While the mild recession of the early 2000s produced cuts to education in 34 states (McNeil, 2009a), those cuts were not as severe as the effects of the recession of the late 2000s. “Though state policymakers generally try to spare k-12 education when budgets are cut, such protection becomes harder in a severe recession. Elementary and secondary education funding is usually the biggest single expenditure in state government – 20.9 percent of all state spending nationally in fiscal
2008…just slightly behind is Medicaid, the state-federal health-insurance program for the poor and people with disabilities, which made up 20.7 percent of state budgets last fiscal year” (McNeil, 2009a, paragraph 17).

As the 2009-2010 school year began, many schools suffered from large class sizes, job cuts, textbook/material cuts, and overall reduced resources (Robelen, 2009). Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education, at this time, expressed great concern about the budget gaps (Maxwell, 2010). States had addressed the allocation of funds to schools through various means. Oregon decided not to increase mathematics requirements while Alabama cut all agencies by 12.5% (McNeil, 2009a). In California, thousands of teachers were let go due to the state’s $26 billion budget gap (Robelen, 2009). From 2008-2010, California’s public schools lost $17 billion in state aid and were predicted to suffer up to $3 billion more in cuts in the fiscal 2011 (Maxwell, 2010).

In March of 2010, budget matters had a tight grip on communities across the country. Lawmakers prepared to cut school funding (Maxwell, 2010). For the fiscal year 2011, thirty-five states had a $35 billion collective budget gap (Maxwell, 2010). While half of the states prepared to significantly cut k-12 schooling in the 2011 fiscal year, a select few proposed slight increases in education (Maxwell, 2010).

**New Jersey Economic Strife**

Governor Jon Corzine (Jan 2006 – Jan 2010), despite economic troubles, found a means to allocate funds to precollegiate schooling. While the overall budget was cut from $33.5 billion in 2008 to $32.9 in 2009, Corzine managed to include a 7% increase to k-12 education (Gewertz, 2009a). Corzine borrowed $3.9 billion dollars in 2008 to use towards school renovations and new construction. He hoped that the allocation of that
money would stimulate the failing economy (Gewertz, 2009b). He also reduced benefits to public employees and upped the retirement age of 60 to 62 (Gewertz, 2009a). In January 2009, Governor Corzine pledged that education would remain one of his major focuses (Gewertz, 2009b). Corzine warned that more cuts would be probable in the state’s fiscal 2010 budget (Gewertz, 2009b).

Christopher Christie defeated incumbent Governor Jon S. Corzine in the November 3, 2009 election (Gewertz, 2009c). Christie recognized the public’s dissatisfaction with income, state, and property taxes (Gewertz, 2009c). His agenda included a tightening of the already existing 4% cap on school budget growth (Gewertz, 2009c).

The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), with approximately 200,000 members, was one of Christie’s strongest opponents during his campaign (Gewertz, 2009c). Christie’s education agenda offered support to voucher and charter schools. He publicly stated that he would like to see more charter schools open in the state (Gewertz, 2009c). Opponents of Christie, such as Democrat Shirley K. Turner, chairwoman of the Senate education committee, argued that Christie would not be able to improve education without addressing key issues such as unemployment and housing. According to her, Christie’s desire to open new charter schools would not have been a solution to the issues plaguing NJ public schools (Gewertz, 2009c). Furthermore, Christie tried to close the $2.2 billion gap in New Jersey’s $29 billion budget (Maxwell, 2010). Christie’s decision to halt $475 million in state aid to schools, forced many districts to make significant cuts (Maxwell, 2010).

While Christie continued to promise that public schools would not suffer, most
education groups strongly opposed his suggestion (Maxwell, 2010). The New Jersey Education Association opposed Christie’s emphasis on school budgets as the source of budget problems in NJ, and instead requested focus on county-level corruption and the reinstatement of the Millionaire’s Tax (which targeted those making over $400,000 a year) (Gewertz, 2010). Tensions ran high between the Governor and the NJEA. The NJEA referred to its relationship with Christie as a Captain Ahab hunting his white whale. And, Christie referred to the union as a crying, pouting nine-year old (Gewertz, 2010).

Governor Christie cut $475 million in aid to education in February 2010. He proposed a $29.3 billion budget, which would include $820 million less on precollegiate education. The governor’s office argued that the loss of the one-time federal stimulus money mostly accounted for the $820 million drop. The office also suggested that the fiscal 2011 budget actually included a 2.4% increase in state aid for education (Gewertz, 2010). Additionally, new public employees would have a scaled back pension, and current employees would have to pay 1.5% towards their health benefits (Gewertz, 2010).

Just days before the April school budget vote, Governor Christie exhorted voters to reject budgets if teachers did not accept a one-year pay freeze as part of that budget (Gewertz, 2010). In April 2010, voter rejected most of the districts’ school budgets in NJ. Not since 1976 have so many budgets been voted down (Gewertz, 2010). Consequently, districts were forced to slash their budgets, resulting in teacher layoffs in most districts.

Overview of Crimson Rock

Town Overview

Demographics. Lindsay worked at the high school, as well as lived in Crimson Rock.
Rock during the 2009-2010 school year. At the time of the study, Crimson Rock had a total population of approximately 27,000 people. The median age in town was 40 years old, with approximately 75% of the population being over the age of 18. While 50% of males over the age of 15 were married, only 40% of females over the age of 15 were married. Fifteen percent of family households were run by a single female, and three percent of them were run by a single male. Approximately 10% of the town’s population changed residency (moved into, out of, and/or within the town) within the year time-span (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2010).

Racially, Crimson Rock was approximately 50% white and 30% black, with 20% of the town’s population self-identifying as Hispanic. German, Irish, and Italian were the largest identified ancestry groups. Twenty-five percent of the population was foreign born with only half of that foreign born population now being US citizens. However, two-thirds of that population had been living in the United States for longer than ten years. Thirty percent of the town’s population spoke a language other than English at home. Specifically, 18% of the town’s population spoke Spanish. Eight percent of the town’s population who spoke Spanish as a first language claimed that they spoke English less than well. Twelve percent of the town’s population spoke Asian and/or other languages (USCB, 2010).

**Educational attainment.** At the time of the study, there were 7,000 enrolled students from nursery school through college/graduate school enrollment. Eighty-five percent of the town’s population over the age of twenty-five had at least a high school diploma, and 20% had at least a bachelor’s degree. Six percent of people age 25 or older finished less than 9th grade and 7% stopped school between grades 9 and 12. Forty
percent of people age 25 or older only had a high school diploma. Twenty-five percent of people age 25 or older attempted college and/or received an associate’s degree. While 15% of people age 25 or older completed college, an additional 5% of people age 25 or older, completed graduate school (USCB, 2010).

**Economics.** At the time of the study, the average median household income in Crimson Rock was just over $55,000 and the average mean household income was slightly over $70,000. The median average cost of a home was $330,000. Sixty percent of the town population owned their housing unit, while 40% rented. The median monthly owner costs were $2300, while the median gross rent was $1000 (USCB, 2010).

Over 6% of individuals lived below the poverty line and over 3% of families lived below the poverty line. The largest subgroup living below the poverty line was female-run households. Over 8% of that group lived below the poverty line (USCB, 2010). Thirty percent of the town’s working population held management, professional, and related occupations. Two-thirds of the professional jobs were in the educational services and healthcare industries. The other 70% of the employed population had service, sales, construction, maintenance, production and/or transportation jobs. Over 6% of individuals were unemployed (USCB, 2010).

**Crimson Rock School District**

Crimson Rock was a preK – 12 district, comprised of six schools. The district offered half-day preschool and full-day kindergarten, as well as a Gifted and Talented program at the elementary school. Basic Skills, ESL, and Special Education programs were offered at all levels. Athletics, performing and visual art programs, and Junior ROTC were offered at the secondary level (New Jersey Department of Education
The high school held accreditation by the Middle States Association of Secondary Schools (Blinded Citation). The district relied more on local sources of revenue and less on state sources of revenue than the state average (NJDOE, 2010). The total comparative cost per pupil and the total cost per pupil both fell approximately $1,500 less than the state average (NJDOE, 2010).

**Crimson Rock School District academic performance.** Crimson Rock High School failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009, and had been classified as a school in need of improvement for over five years. The district as a whole, however, was not identified as in need of improvement. The high school failed to achieve AYP in both math and language arts literacy. The proficiency percentages in the two categories actually decreased between 2008 and 2009. The math proficiency scores decreased by two percent from 2008 to 2009, falling 10% below the state average. While the language arts literacy proficiency percentage fell by about half a percent from 2008 to 2009, it reflected the overall state score that decreased 1.7%. However, Crimson Rock’s language arts proficiency rate fell about 5% lower than the state average both years (NJDOE, 2009).

In 2008, the overall dropout rate was about double the state average. In 2009, the district showed improvement with the dropout rate lowering to only 1.5 times higher than the state average. In 2009, the demographic breakdown of Crimson Rock High School’s dropout rates revealed that students with disabilities, white students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students consistently represented higher dropout populations than the state average. Those subgroups’ dropout rates ranged anywhere from 10% to 200% higher than the subgroups’ state averages. Particularly higher than the state
average of 2.8%, over 10% of Limited English Proficient students dropped out of the Crimson Rock’s school system. On the other hand, while in 2008 African-Americans dropped out of Crimson Rock more than the state average, in following year, the data revealed that African-Americans students were staying in school more than the state average. Consequently, the overall graduation rate in Crimson Rock fell about 5% lower than the state average (NJDOE, 2009).

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) results revealed that Crimson Rock students scored approximately 75 points lower in the math, verbal, and essay test sections than the state average. The Advanced Placement (AP) results revealed that an estimated 25% of the test takers earned at least a 3 (out of a 5) or higher (NJDOE, 2010). Finally, approximately two-thirds of the student population intended to pursue two or four year colleges, while the other third planned to join the military, enter the workforce, or were still undecided (NJDOE, 2010).

**Crimson Rock High School employees.** At the high school, there were approximately 120 professional staff members, including teachers, counselor, nurses, and librarians (Blinded Citation). All teachers at Crimson Rock High School were highly qualified, indicating that they held at least a bachelor’s degree, demonstrated core knowledge competence in their subject areas, and were certified/licensed by the State of New Jersey. Approximately one-third of the teachers held Masters degrees, while the other two-thirds held Bachelors degrees. No teacher had a doctoral degree (NJDOE, 2009) nor did any teacher hold National Board Certification (NJDOE, 2010).

There were approximately five less district administrators than the state average, which consequently made the student per administrator ratio slightly higher (NJDOE,
Eight years was the average length of experience for administrators and teachers in 2009. Administrators and faculty earned a few thousand dollars per year less than the state average (NJDOE, 2010).

Faculty attendance rates fell about 2\% lower than the state average in 2009, while 2007 and 2006 the faculty attendance rates both surpassed the state average (NJDOE, 2010). Over the prior three years to this study, the teacher mobility rate had fluctuated from approximately 2\% of the faculty entering and leaving during the school year to 7\% (NJDOE, 2010).

**Crimson Rock High School students.** There were about 1,200 students enrolled in Crimson Rock High School. Its students attended school about half an hour less than the average state student. Average class size was slightly smaller than the average state school; however, there were three times as many special education students in specialized classrooms than the state average. Almost one-fifth of the students had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Additionally, the majority of students spoke English as their first language at home; however, close to one-fifth of the student population spoke Spanish or Creole as a first language. Other languages such as Portuguese, French, and Arabic represented less than 1\% of the population. Approximately 3\% of the student population had limited English proficiency (NJDOE, 2010).

The overall student attendance rate fell about 2.5\% shy of the state average in 2009, with the special education student in specialized classes falling 12\% below the state average (NJDOE, 2010). The student mobility rate varied greatly over the prior three years to this study, from approximately 5\% to over 10\% (NJDOE, 2010). The suspension rate over the past three years ranged from 1\% to 18\% higher than the state average, with
no expulsions (NJDOE, 2010).

In line with the typical graduation requirements, coursework at Crimson Rock High School included four years of English, four years of physical education, three years of science, three years of social studies, three years of mathematics, one year of art, one year of a foreign language, one year of family/life skills, and four elective courses (Blinded Citation). There were over thirty afterschool clubs/activities that students could join, in addition to a wide array of athletic teams (Blinded Citation).

Overview of Mapleton

Town Overview

Demographics. During the 2009-2010 school year, Natalie taught at two middle schools (Carson Middle School and Wright Middle School) in the very town in which she lived, Mapleton, New Jersey. With a total population of approximately 45,000, Mapleton was situated in central New Jersey. In 2009, the median age of the town’s population was 30 years old. Over 80% of the population was over the age of 18. Over 50% of males over the age of 15 were married and over 50% of females over the age of 15 were married. While over 10% of family households were run by a single female, only 3% of family households were run by a single male. Approximately 10% of the town’s population changed residency (moved into, out of, and/or within the town) within the year prior to this study (USCB, 2010).

The town was over 40% white, approximately 20% black, and less than 30% Asian. Over 10% of the population identified as Hispanic (can be of any race). Irish, Italian, and Polish were the largest identified ancestry groups (USCB, 2010). Of its population, 30% were foreign born. More than 40% of the foreign born population
became US citizens, even though over 65% had been living in the United States longer than ten years. More than one-third of the town’s population spoke a language other than English at home. About 8% of the town’s population spoke Spanish as a first language and an additional 15% of the town’s population spoke Asian or other languages at home. Over 3% of the town’s population who spoke Spanish as a first language claimed that they spoke English less than well (USCB, 2010).

**Educational attainment.** At the time of this study, there were approximately 18,000 students enrolled from nursery school through college/graduate school. Of the population over the age of 25, more than 90% held at least a high school diploma. Additionally, 40% had at least a bachelor’s degree. Of people age 25 or older, 3% finished less than 9th grade and another 4% stopped school between grades 9 and 12. Over 25% of the people age 25 or older, only held a high school diploma. About 20% of people age 25 or older, attempted college and/or received an associate’s degree. Of people age 25 or older, approximately 30% completed college and another 18% completed graduate school (USCB, 2010).

**Economics.** At the time of this study, the average median household income was $85,000 and the average mean household income was $95,000. The median average cost of a home was around $380,000. While 65% owned their housing unit, the other 35% rented. Owners paid approximately $2400 in median monthly owner costs, while renters paid $1100 in median gross rent (USCB, 2010).

Over 5% of individuals in town were unemployed. Of the employed population, 45% had management, professional, and related occupations. Healthcare and education jobs largely made up this group. Fifty-five percent of employed persons held service,
sales, construction, maintenance, production and/or transportation jobs (USCB, 2010).

At the time of this study, over 6% of individuals were living below the poverty line and 5% of the town’s families were living below the poverty line. Female-led households represented the largest subgroup with 12% of female households living below the poverty line (USCB, 2010).

Mapleton School District

The district was comprised of ten schools, ranging from kindergarten through high school. In addition to its K-12 schools, the district offered tuition preschool with available aid to those in financial need (NJDOE, 2010). In comparison to the state average, the district had about five additional administrators in its ten schools. The average administrator experience was about eight years, and the faculty experience was about seven years. The average administrator salary and faculty salary were both several thousand dollars higher than the state average. The district derived approximately seventy-five percent of its revenue from local sources and twenty percent from state sources, with the other five percent coming from federal or other sources. The total comparative cost per pupil and the total cost per pupil fell about one thousand dollars less than the state average (NJDOE, 2010).

Carson Middle School Overview

The Carson School was one of three middle schools in Mapleton, housing sixth through eighth graders (NJDOE, 2010). Its school day was approximately 15 minutes shorter than the average school day in NJ. With approximately 550 students at the school, students at Carson Middle School were in classes with approximately two more students than the state average (NJDOE, 2010).
Carson Middle School did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, but was not labeled as a school in need of improvement. In 2009, the language arts literacy proficiency percentage was about 6% higher than the state average, while the mathematics proficiency percentage was about 10% lower than the state average. Carson Middle School’s language arts-literacy proficiency percentage increased by about 3% from 2008 to 2009, reflecting the state average increase of almost 5%. The 2009 mathematics proficiency percentage was approximately 0.5% higher than 2008, falling short of the state average increase of almost 2% (NJDOE, 2009).

Carson Middle School students. The racial diversity of Mapleton was reflected in the Carson Middle School’s student population. The approximate 550 student population was comprised of approximately 30% white student, 30% black students, 25% Asian students, and 10% Hispanic students, with multiracial/other races accounting for the other small percentage (NJDOE, 2010). While approximately 70% of the students spoke English as their first language at home, 6% spoke Spanish, 14% Asian languages, and another 10% spoke other languages (unidentified in the report). Accordingly, between 1-2% of students were labeled as Limited English Proficient at the Carson Middle School. About 12% of the students at the Carson Middle School had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (NJDOE, 2010).

The overall student attendance rate at Carson Middle School for the prior two years to this study exceeded the state average by about 1% (NJDOE, 2009). Additionally, between 5%-8% of students in the previous three years entered and left the district. These figures fell several percentages below the state average (NJDOE, 2010). Over the prior
three years, suspension rates at Carson Middle School decreased from over 10% in 2007 (double the state average) to 0% in 2009. No student had been expelled in the three years prior to this study (NJDOE, 2010).

**Carson Middle School teachers.** All teachers at Carson Middle School met the highly qualified criteria of holding a subject appropriate certification, proving competence in their subject area, and holding at least a bachelor’s degree. Approximately 60% of teachers at Carson Middle School held a bachelors degree, while the other 40% held master’s degrees. No teacher at Carson School had a doctoral degree (NJDOE, 2009) and no faculty members held National Board Certification (NJDOE, 2010).

There were approximately ten students per faculty member at Carson Middle School. Faculty attendance rates beat the state average by 1-2 % over the previous three years to this study. The faculty mobility rate was higher (by up to 9%) than the state average over the past three years; however, in 2009 the school’s faculty mobility rate was practically the same as the state average (NJDOE, 2010).

**Wright Middle School Overview**

One of the three 6-8th grade middle schools in Mapleton, Wright Middle School (WMS) housed approximately 550 students. The school day at WMS was about 15 minutes shorter than the average school day in New Jersey. Students attended classes with approximately four more students than the average class in NJ (NJDOE, 2010).

In 2009, the Wright Middle School did not make AYP, however, it was not identified as a school in need of improvement. The language arts literacy proficiency percentage at WMS was approximately 2% higher than the state average in 2009. Wright Middle School’s language arts literacy proficiency percentage increased by about 4%
from 2008, reflective of the state pattern of about 5%. The mathematics proficiency percentage at WMS was about 4% higher than the state average in 2009. The 2009 mathematics proficiency percentage was approximately 2% higher than 2008, reflective of the state average increase of almost 2% (NJDOE, 2009).

**Wright Middle School students.** Wright Middle School was comprised of a racially diverse student population. Forty percent of its students was black, 25% Asian, almost 20% Hispanic, and the remaining student body was white (NJDOE, 2010). Approximately 70% of students at WMS spoke English as their first language at home. The remaining 30% spoke Spanish (10%), Asian languages (15%) or other languages (5%) at home. Additionally, almost 2% of population was identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. Almost 15% of the 550 students at Wright School had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (NJDOE, 2010).

The student attendance rate in 2009 was almost 2% higher than the state average. The student mobility rate fluctuated over the prior three years, from 6% to 12%, with the state average maintaining itself around 11%. No students were expelled in the prior three years to this study; however, suspension rates were consistently at least double the state average (NJDOE, 2010). Additionally, students were offered a variety of extracurricular activities. Visual and performing arts, technology, world languages, and honor societies were all extracurricular opportunities at WMS (NJDOE, 2010).

**Wright Middle School teachers.** All teachers at Wright Middle School met the highly qualified criteria by holding a bachelor’s degree, demonstrating competence in their subject areas, and holding certification in their subject area. Approximately 60% of Wright School teachers held a bachelor’s degree, while 40% held a master’s degree
There were approximately ten students per teacher in Wright School, approximately one percent lower than the state average. The faculty attendance rate over the prior three years held consistent at about 97.5%, beating the state average by about 1% each year. Furthermore, the faculty mobility rate decreased dramatically over the three years prior to this study. In 2007, with the state average at 6.2%, about 9% of the faculty who entered that school year left that same year. In 2009, with the state average at 4.0%, not even 2% of WMS faculty left after entering that same year (NJDOE, 2010).

Summary

In this chapter, the essential context of this study was explored. Since the existing research supports that first-year teachers attempt to “survive” the first year (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Woods, 1977) and are concerned with job security (Huling, 2006), the national economic recession and NJ budget crisis certainly shaped the experiences of the participants. The economic recession that began in December 2007 (Maxwell, 2010) led to job cuts in both private and public sectors. School budgets were not an exception, with many schools being forced to make cuts in the 2009-2010 school year (Robelen, 2009). In particular, the governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie slashed $475 million in state aid to schools (Gewertz, 2010). As discussed in the following chapters, both participants’ schools suffered because of these cuts.

Since the analysis of the data depends greatly on the school context, it was important to explain the setting of each school and district. Essential to the research questions, understanding racial composition, educational achievement, and socioeconomic status of the town, enabled me as a researcher to analyze the responses
and experiences of the participants. In this chapter, both participants’ districts were
detailed according to demographics, educational achievement, and economics. An
overview of the each participant’s district and school placement was provided in this
chapter. Understanding the composition of the town, district, and school will become
important in the subsequent analysis chapters.
Chapter V

Lindsay’s First Year

Multiple sources of data were analyzed and triangulated to ensure that the conclusions were not isolated occurrences (Yin, 1994). In the first section of this chapter, I explore overarching expectations and views of the district. In the second section of the chapter, I analyze Lindsay’s self-reported experiences in three divisions (beginning of the year, middle of the year, and the end of the year). Multiple sources of data were used in the self-reported section and are presented with attention to chronology. I demonstrate the ways that the school acted on Lindsay’s constructions of parents of color. In the final section of the chapter, I synthesize Lindsay’s experiences within the context of her school district.

Image of the District

To understand Lindsay’s experiences during her first year of teaching, it was important to analyze the context: her school district. As the researcher, I collected, coded, and analyzed publically available data as per the methodology of this study. I believed that these data would provide a rich understanding of the projected attitude towards parents, race, and novice teachers. The teacher handbook, student handbook, and district website were important documents in understanding Crimson Rock School District, and subsequently Lindsay’s first year of teaching.

Crimson Rock’s teacher handbook (approximately 100 pages) and student handbook (approximately 50 pages) were purposefully created, formal documents that revealed the district’s expectations, missions, and perspectives of how it wanted its school system to function. These documents revealed the ideal image of Crimson Rock
School District. Analyzing these data helped reveal the role of the student, teacher, and parent in that projected image. Additionally, the Crimson Rock website revealed the district’s communicative relationship with the public. The analysis of Crimson Rock website included the district homepage, high school homepage, available external links, uploaded documents, and Lindsay’s homework page. The online sources were analyzed as communication between the district and the public (specifically parents and teachers). I considered the online sources as less formal, however, equally as important in the triangulation of this data set. The website allowed me to understand the information, resources, and “news” that the district felt were important to share with the public (including parents, teachers, and students).

While the coding of these data was much more detailed, for the purposes of analysis, conclusions have been broken up into five major categories: parents, teachers, race, language, and socioeconomics. While the first three categories clearly reflect the research study’s purpose, I believe that language and socioeconomics directly connected with race in the district. Issues of language and non-English speakers, as it related to families, revealed Crimson Rock’s view of those who did not practice middle class white English (Kendall, 2006). Furthermore, given that socioeconomics are often directly correlated with race in America (Lee, 2005), I analyzed the district’s perspective on socioeconomics. All five areas helped frame Lindsay’s experiences, views, and responses throughout the study.

Parents

In the formal documents of the school, it was clear that parents were primarily expected to participate in a legal manner in the school. Specifically, almost all of the
information regarding parents mentioned in the student handbook directly related to
discipline. Parents were required to fulfill legal expectations, such as reporting absences
and changes in custodial issues. Minimally, parents were expected to be involved in
extreme discipline infractions that resulted in suspension, such as fighting and
harassment. There was no information given about the purpose or execution of the
discipline conferences. Parents were seen as participants only in extreme violations of
conduct and were not expected to play a significant role in the child’s life at the school,
outside of issues of legality.

The district clearly stated that it believed that discipline and code of conduct were
a shared outcome of the home, community, and school. It appeared that the district’s
vision was an “educentric” view by which it assumed that its vision corresponded with
the home (Dunlap & Alva, 1999). No specific information was given on the philosophy’s
development; however, the researcher concluded that the district assumed that all homes
shared the same vision of appropriate conduct based on societal norms (i.e., white norms)
(Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). Furthermore, in the superintendent’s letter to parents
in September, he thanked them for their continued support of their children and
emphasized the importance of parental participation in school. He recommended regular
communication between parents and teachers, as he believed that parents had power in
the academic success of their children and in the overall functioning of the school.

The district had few obligations to parents. Essentially, the district had to inform
parents of student grades and absences, as well as to involve them in extreme disciplinary
action. Parents were not to expect any other communication about grades beside the
mailed formal reports (report cards and mid-marking period progress reports). Beyond
these isolated examples, the handbooks did not mandate any other required communication between the district and home.

While the superintendent had encouraged parents to contact individual staff members, the student handbook did not contain a staff directory. Only online, was there a complete list of high school staff (administrators, teachers, nurses, librarians, and counselors); however, there were no links to the email addresses/phone numbers of staff members. There was not even a main building number listed on the staff directory. So, while the superintendent encouraged parental contact, it was clearly difficult to find the information to make that recommended contact. Additionally, parent conferences and back-to-school night were not listed on the school calendar in the handbooks. Only in an online guidance newsletter was there a note informing parents of the evening events of back-to-school night and an underclassman assembly.

There were few available services that were made known to parents. The district webpage included information on tutoring services provided by district teachers at local community centers and the school guidance webpage provided directions for parents regarding the college application process. The district website included health resources for parents, specifically on the spread of H1N1 and on NJ FamilyCare (health insurance for those who could not afford it). While there was no explanation of the specific procedures, the formal documents did notify parents of existing rights in isolated situations such as filing a harassment grievance, accessing student records, and appealing a student’s loss of credits. The formal documents did not mandate or even encourage parents to have much interaction with the school.

Both the district and high school homepages had an icon for parents/community
that included links ranging from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) information, the district’s school report card, and budget information to local weather, club/activity information, and the Parent-Teacher Organization. The district relied greatly on the internet to convey messages and expectations to parents. More so than the handbooks, the website recognized that parents were pivotal members in the school process by giving them their own section of the website.

The district saw the purpose of its website as conveying important health/safety information as well as encouraging traditional parental involvement. The formal documents that every student and teacher received did not focus greatly on parental involvement, obligations, or expectations. Overall, there was minimal interaction offered between the district and the home. While the website provided more information, the three sources of data revealed that parents were not valued participants in the educational system, but rather recipients of information concerning discipline and what the district perceived as important for parents. The lack of a directory or placement of parent conferences on the calendar in the handbooks revealed that the district was not concerned with encouraging or increasing outreach to parents. Parents had some access to the school; however, it was clear that the district minimally valued parental involvement and only did so through traditional forms.

Similarly, teachers had limited obligations to parents. Teachers were expected to “involve” parents in disciplinary action in the classroom; however, the handbook did not explicitly define how teachers should contact parents or what “involvement” in the disciplinary action meant. Teachers were expected to maintain a teacher webpage, giving parents access to upcoming homework assignments. Specifically, Lindsay’s homework
page was accessed and reviewed. She posted on the homework webpage everyday. Her assignments ranged from lab worksheets, short answers, projects, and reminders to study. Lindsay’s homework posts were simple and straightforward, with little explanation on how to do the assignment. Lindsay posted her time availability and e-mail address.

Parents could use the teacher webpages as means to understand the academic requirements of their children. However, the lack of uploaded information and brief details forced the parents to draw conclusions. Being able to access teacher webpages revealed that the district wanted parents to be part of the homework process.

**Teachers**

Primarily, expectations of teachers in Crimson Rock were greatly limited to following protocol when it came to student safety and the basic functioning of the school. The majority of the teacher handbook explained the procedures for routine practices at the school, such as fire drills and field trips. Surprisingly, teachers were not mentioned in any substantive way in the student handbook. The student handbook focused so much on student obligations to the school, that it ignored the teachers’ obligations to the student and/or parent. Ironically, while the protocol for reporting broken furniture was clearly outlined, very little formal instruction was given to teachers on interacting with parents or dealing with the diversity of the population.

The teacher evaluation process was outlined in the handbook, revealing what the district wanted from its teachers. Teachers’ final evaluations included an interpersonal section that clearly valued relationships, including those with parents. The school district expected teachers to develop good interpersonal skills with students, colleagues, and parents; however, the district did not outline successful interpersonal skills. The district
failed to clearly explain how teachers should interact with parents, but assumed that teachers would know how to interact with all parents. White normative practices (including communication and the ability to navigate complex systems) are the operating norms in the United States. Perhaps, the district assumed codes of normalcy (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999) and disregarded teachers’ (and parents’) communication practices.

Little information was offered specifically to novice teachers. There was no explanation of the mentoring process or resources. The teacher handbook offered a section on the observation and evaluation of novice teachers as a means to address any deficiencies in instruction. Evaluations focused on teaching methods, content knowledge, classroom management, preparation, interpersonal skills, student feedback, professionalism, communication, and work habits. As outlined in the interpersonal skills section of the annual evaluation, teachers were expected to provide support for and respect their colleagues. The novice teacher’s concern with job security would presumably have affected his/her ability to openly communicate with the administrator addressing his/her areas of deficiency (Huling, 2006).

While the teacher handbook did not focus on novice teacher development, the district website had a specific page for novice teachers, providing links to outside webpages. Most of the areas related to educational trends (like Everyday Math, Harry Wong, and Bloom’s Taxonomy), classroom management, and differentiated instruction/assessment. There was no mentioning of parents or race in any of the recommended links. There was a separate page of general resources for all teachers that provided links to outside webpages on teacher materials (lesson plans, rubrics, project ideas, assessment, etc). Clearly, the district recognized that the internet offered many
resources for novice and veteran teachers; however, it did not generate any sources on its own. It was unclear how carefully the outside websites were screened for compliance with district expectations.

**Race and Diversity**

The district acknowledged that all students should receive equitable education, however, no plan was provided to achieve equality. The school district recognized its diversity and clearly stated that its philosophy was to serve all students, regardless of race, age, ability, nationality, or socioeconomic status. It aimed to help students create successful and meaningful relationships with people of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. It was unclear if the district believed that it was achieving its goal since it did not offer any procedures, definitions, or markers of that goal. Its philosophy seemed open-minded, but the execution of its ideology was not clearly conveyed to its members (i.e., teachers).

In both of the student handbook and district webpage, the district stated that it valued its diversity as a strength. However, besides that claim, the district did not discuss diversity outside of a few legal references to anti-discrimination policies. It seemed that the district knew that it should value its diversity and provided a blanket-statement expressing such; however, the district did not support this philosophy with any additional information, strategies, or proof.

**Language and Non-English Speakers**

Teachers were not given any support or guidance from the district on interacting with students or parents who did not speak English. The handbook did not make teachers aware that they might have students/parents who did not speak English. There were no
identifiable resources provided (i.e., translation services) to help the teacher.

Additionally, the student handbook was written in English and no other copy was available for translation. According to the formal handbooks, it seemed that this population was not viewed as a stakeholder in the community as the district clearly served whom it believed to be its majority population (English speakers).

Furthermore, the district webpage did not provide access for non-English speakers. The webpage was entirely in English, with the exception of the three links that were offered in Spanish (and not any other language). Users had to flip through many English pages to find the Spanish links. All three of those links were legal items posted in Spanish: a link to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the electronic voter registration forms, and a letter to parents concerning H1N1. However, it should be noted that the links provided in the H1N1 letter were English-only sites. Also, the district was most likely required to post the FEMA clause, which was translated for the district by FEMA. There was a relation that the district was reinforcing between low-income families, race (Lee, 2005) and non-English speakers. The link to voter registration ballots in Spanish perhaps reflected the district’s recognition that the large Spanish-speaking population’s votes were needed to pass the budget in the midst of the fiscal crisis in NJ (Maxwell, 2010). Thus, the district made this official form (and only this form) available to parents who did not speak English because it would have benefitted school finances.

The only piece of information that was seemingly translated by the district was a back-to-school night reminder. In a guidance newsletter, there were English and Spanish notes informing parents of back-to-school night. It was not a direct translation and used Anglicisms (such as “homeroom” and “back-to-school”). Consequently, the notice did
not even identify what the event was at school. The grammar was also inaccurate and the
date was not sequenced accordingly. The English notice stated that parents should know
their child’s homeroom, while the Spanish notice explained that homeroom and period 2
were the same thing. The differing explanations revealed the district’s assumption that
English-speaking parents would be familiar with their child’s schedule, while Spanish
speakers would not know the format of the school day. While the back-to-school
reminder attempted to include Spanish parents, the translation revealed underlying
assumptions about Spanish-speaking parents.

The lack of translation of the student handbook and the website (with exception of
the aforementioned documents) revealed that non-English speakers held very little
importance in the school system. Not only did the district disregard non-English speakers,
but also clearly expressed its assumptions about Spanish-speaking parents as
economically disadvantaged and ill informed about school processes. It was clear that
non-English speakers were not considered stakeholders in the school and did not have the
same access to the school as English speakers.

Economics

There is little discussion of economics and its effect on the teacher or student.
Teachers were not informed of the potential influences that economics could have had on
their job, the functioning of the school, interactions with parents, or the success of their
students. In the formal handbooks, the economic situation of students was not a concern
of the district. No explanation of how to qualify for free/reduced lunch, health insurance,
or other services was offered in the student handbook. While the handbook was intended
for all students, regardless of economic status, it denied students and parents the
opportunity to understand the legally available services. The webpage, however, did offer links to help from FEMA and FamilyCare, which seemingly had been distributed through the state and simply posted by the district.

Furthermore, the overall economy mattered to the school district. The district’s leadership realized that its budget, referendums, and funding reflect local and state economies. Consequently, it emphasized the need to prioritize education in times of economic decline. Using non-specific research, the superintendent claimed that parental participation (also left undefined) could help a student overcome economic disadvantage. Accordingly, the website claimed parental participation was twice as important in student success than his/her socioeconomic level. It seemed that the superintendent believed that parents could help their children overcome economic barriers by providing the “right kind” of support. Conversely, it appeared that the superintendent was suggesting that poor families were to blame for their children’s failure since they did not provide that “right kind” of support. It appeared that the superintendent ascribed to Lewis’s (1966) notion of the “culture of poverty,” which blamed poor children for lacking the culture to acclimate to school expectations. Clearly, concern for the economic condition of state education was evident; however, individual socioeconomic status of families was not important to the district.

**Analysis of District Expectations**

The teacher handbook, student handbook, and district webpage created an image of what the district expected of its teachers, parents, and students. Clearly, the parents’ obligations to the school outweighed both the individual teacher’s and the school’s obligations to the parents. The district had expectations of parents, but the parent should
not have had many expectations (outside of legal) of the school. The parents’ primary role was legal in nature, often relating to issues of attendance and discipline. It appeared that the parent “joined” the processes of the school in the final stages (i.e., a disciplinary hearing after the student had already been suspended). Thus, while the parent did have a role in the school, it was not one of a stakeholder who shaped the values, norms, or culture of the school system.

The sources did not clearly define the expected relationship between parents and teachers. The teacher handbook revealed what the district believed to be a comprehensive manual on the teaching experience in the district; however, it offered very little guidance on parental interactions. There was no discussion of parent conferences, back-to-school night, the procedures for contacting a parent, or accessing translation services.

Parents were given health information, homework access, district information, state resources, budget information, and other links to important information and events. Parents were seen as important, however, their role in the school community was undefined based on the multiple sources of data.

While the district recognized its racial and economical diversity, it provided little to no information on its student population. It referenced equity in education for all students; however, it did not provide any specific philosophical approach or procedures to ensure equity. Additionally, non-English speakers did not have a role in the handbook and students of low-income families did not seem to matter in the district. The majority of the website was intended for English-speaking parents. Non-English speaking parents were barely acknowledged and clearly not valued by the district. The exclusion of information (i.e., race, language, and economics) revealed the district’s underlying
philosophy of education. Parents, teachers, and racially/language diverse populations did not have stakeholder positions. The district believed that students should abide by a set of standards, regardless of teachers, race, language, cultural differences, and parental involvement.

In regards to a first-year teacher, the available resources would have helped novice teachers follow daily protocol, however, larger issues of school equity or parental involvement were not clearly defined. The novice teacher would have probably intended to use the handbooks to seek answers on protocol (i.e., fire drills). The novice teacher could not have sought information regarding expectations of their interaction with parents. And, while novice teachers were given access to recommended online pedagogical strategies, school-specific expectations were not provided. Overall, the data sources revealed that the role of the teacher was to execute daily procedures without regard to parents or diversity.

Through the available resources, the novice teacher, in this case Lindsay, was left with the impression that protocol and student behavior were priorities in Crimson Rock. Parents had an unclear role in the district, which left Lindsay to create her own plan of interaction and involvement. Since economics, race, and non-English speakers were only mentioned in superficial means, Lindsay was forced to draw wide conclusions on these issues in relation to the education of a child. The district’s tacit and explicit expectations created the culture of Crimson Rock High School and shaped Lindsay’s first-year experience.
Beginning of the Year: Lindsay’s Immersion into Crimson Rock

Initial Observations of Race/Awareness of Race

At the beginning of her first year of teaching, Lindsay did not seem very comfortable talking about race and tried to justify certain beliefs and comments. In both her initial interview and journal responses, Lindsay was most comfortable discussing race as a number, avoiding making any conclusions about her own race in connection with people of color (Sullivan, 2006). There seemed to be a level of discomfort in her answers as she pretty much refused to draw any personal conclusions on the data that she provided.

According to Lindsay, the school was 85% black. She was hesitant to give a percentage on white and Hispanic students in the school because she found that some Hispanic students appeared to be white and vice versa. In discussing the demographics of her particular classes, she said that her freshman classes were “85% black, like five to seven percent white, and then you know ten or so Hispanic,” while her senior elective had “like sixty or seventy percent. Oh, not even. It’s actually a lot of Hispanic students in those ones so I’d say like half Hispanic, and then maybe like a quarter black.” When describing the school she worked in, Lindsay explained that the teaching demographic was “pretty white honestly. There’s a lot of black teachers, but mostly white…maybe a couple Hispanics, but I would say it’s like 95% white, maybe like 2% black and whatever, Hispanic and then definitely more females.” According to Lindsay’s description, 95% of the teaching staff resembled her as a white female. While she stated that there were “a lot of black teachers,” she only identified 2% as black (which according to the school data would account for less than 5 black teachers in the whole
school). A possible explanation is that Lindsay might have felt like there were many black teachers in comparison to the past experiences in her life (Clark, 1988).

Lindsay was acutely aware of her own racial and gender identity. She stated that she was “tiny” “really white” “with blonde hair, blue eyes” and that she fulfilled the “stereotypical looking white girl” image. She did not believe that her image affected her in the classroom as much as it did with parents. “I think that [her image] is not to my advantage in the classroom and [with] parents because I feel like I’m not taken as seriously because of the way that I look.” She compared herself to friends who were white (but with darker features and complexions). “I have friends that have like…I know this probably sounds stupid but are dark skinned, but they’re white. But they’re taken more seriously because I don’t give off of my personality but the way I look. I give off that it’s like not as serious. And also, sometimes I give vibes…it sounds like I’m attacking or worry that I’m prejudging them so they’re prejudging me-type-thing” She thought that her darker skinned, white friends were “taken more seriously” and that she did not “give off a vibe” of being serious. Additionally, Lindsay explained that she “sometime” worried that parent might think “who’s this white girl teaching our kids?” She went on to explain that it might have all be in her head, but that she was “sure there is a little bit that is there” (meaning parents’ judging her by her appearance). It was clear that Lindsay was questioning her assumption of belonging in any environment since it positioned her in one racially different than her (Sullivan, 2006). She stated that one of her friends told her that she would not be taken seriously because of her appearance, thus leading her to question if students and parents would feel the same way. However, she was emphatic in her follow-up response that she “fe[lt] like [she] c[ould] take control of
the classroom.”

At the beginning of the year, Lindsay seemed to be more comfortable discussing socio-economic status, which was never directly asked in either the interview or journal questions. She concluded that socioeconomic status (Heymann & Earle, 2000) affected parental involvement (as shown through attendance at back-to-school night) more than race. She “felt that was the reason there was not a big draw for any parents.” The theme of SES continued, as Lindsay explained that the school needed to avail itself and its resources to parents of lower SES. She stated that the school was situated in a low SES area with working parents. She claimed that the significant reason behind low parental attendance at events “was that many parents may have had to work and could not attend.” Lindsay stated that the low attendance rate “could be linked to race because many of the students and families are black, but I did not make that connection.” She was aware that race might have mattered, but was personally reluctant to draw any conclusions between race and socioeconomic status.

At the beginning of the year, Lindsay displayed a reluctance to discuss the importance of race in her school. It appeared that she did not want to discuss whiteness in connection to her own identity or the school’s in order to avoid coming across as being racist or concerned with race (Jenson, 2005). Thus, she ignored race, or rather exercised colorblindness (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) or race neutrality in her comments (Loutzenheiser, 2003) by making excuses of why race did not matter to her. She developed other explanations for staff comments and her own conclusions on parent behavior. When asked in a journal question what conclusions she drew about the racial breakdown of parents attending back-to-school. Lindsay wrote that, “I did not really draw
any conclusions from the breakdown. The racial part of it wasn’t really a factor for me.”

**Prior Influences Shaping her Identity**

Whiteness shaped Lindsay’s first interview when she discussed her expectations of parents. Lindsay’s past clearly influenced her expectations and interactions (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Clark, 1988) with parents of color in Crimson Rock. Her childhood in a middle class, white home (deCarvalho, 2001) affected her beliefs about school (Clark, 1988). She identified her hometown as an all white community where “you don’t see anything but white people.” She based her first-year expectations on the experiences she had growing up in a white, middle class town. Although her high school had some diversity, as an honors student, Lindsay only attended classes with mostly white students. It appeared that her high school was tracked along racial lines (Oakes, 1985). She used the word “segregated” to describe the classes in her high school. She claimed to be friends with everyone regardless of race, but provided no proof of those high school friendships.

Lindsay carried expectations with her into her teaching and made them a part of her image of involved parents (Weinstein, 1989). Her parents seemingly (self-reportedly) fulfilled the definition of involved parents by attending conferences, checking homework, and being aware of her studies. She described her own parents as having been very involved and “really proactive.” Specifically, she stated, “I think mainly because I’m also biased because I had parents that were really proactive. And so when I came home at night like I had whatever stuff I had to get done…like they didn’t just trust me; it had to be done.” Her parents did not blindly trust her, but rather ensured that she was getting her work done. Consequently, she believed that the more proactive parents were, the less
likely there would be problems in the classroom. She stated, “I think parents, if they’re more proactive, the less problem you have in the classroom. So like calling, getting a call back. Conferences: having them come in. Homework being, not even going through it, but checking that it has at least been completed from the night before.” When asked about her expectations for parental involvement, Lindsay identified herself as having “biased” expectations because of her own upbringing. In the same breath as explaining her own parents’ proactive approach, she explained that coming to conferences/back-to-school night (Tutwiler, 2005) and checking homework (Winters, 1993) were important aspects of parental involvement. Presumably, her parents did exactly that. Referencing her student-teaching interactions with parents, she defined successful parents as proactive parents (like her own) who became a “team” with her.

Lindsay believed that her diverse high school and her college experience enabled her to be open-minded and accepting. She thought that other people would be “shocked” to arrive at a school that was “all black or all white or whatever.” She indicated that her university had “the same demographics as [her] high school” and so “it wasn’t weird.” Her mention that it was “not weird” implied that there was something weird about it (either in her eyes or society’s). Furthermore, Lindsay attempted to prove her comfort with diversity through anecdotes about her experiences at Mid-Atlantic State University. She repeatedly identified it as a diverse university. Even though she was in the nearly all-white track in high school, she stated that she was better prepared for her university’s demographics than white people who did not go to diverse high schools. The university “wasn’t weird” because of her high school environment. Her high school and college experience made her “at ease being with people of different races.”
Lindsay’s teacher education program, including her student teaching experience, influenced the foundation of what she believed (Friebus, 1977) about parental involvement, race, and parents of color. Lindsay did not speak with much enthusiasm or acknowledge much benefit from her education program. When directly asked she stated that she did not learn much on parents or race, however, in other responses, she embedded references to her program in connection to parents and race. When specifically asked about the preparation she received in her program about parents, she stated, “we didn’t really do that much on parent relations.” She expanded by saying that the program “touched” on parental involvement in an ethics course and in the one credit course that runs concurrent to student teaching. She stated, “we touched on it [parental involvement] in a couple of courses…it was just about…what you should and shouldn’t say. You know - don’t say things that you know you’re going to go back and regret later on; make sure you show the parent that you’re on their side, that you’re not working against them. A lot standard stuff, but once they laid out those couple of rules there wasn’t that much other time devoted to it in any other classes really.” The program mostly emphasized classroom interaction, planning, and content-based pedagogy. In regards to parental involvement, the program was more concerned with what future teachers should and should not say (seemingly in a legal sense), as well as making parents be “on the side” of the teacher. Beyond that, Lindsay was unable to identify any information regarding parents from her teacher preparation program. Clearly, expectations, problems, interactions, and/or relationships with parents were not heavily emphasized during her teacher preparation program.

Lindsay described her past experience with parents during student teaching as
limited. She blamed her controlling cooperating teacher for this. Only on a couple of occasions had her cooperating teacher suggested calling parents. Her cooperating teacher “wasn’t a caller. I think she made like the whole five months I was there probably like two calls.” Lindsay disapproved of her cooperating teacher’s lack of phone calls home and emphasized that she would have called more often. Lindsay’s beliefs about calling home sat in conflict with the directives of her cooperating teacher. Lindsay believed during her student teaching that parents should have been more informed (of both negative and positive occurrences in the classroom). In the phone calls that Lindsay did make during student teaching, she described a couple of them as successful where the parents apologized for the misbehavior of their children. She thought of these parents as being on the “same team” and that it assured her that the student was not allowed to behave that way at home. During her student teaching, her phone calls (or intended phone calls) focused on student behavior in the classroom. She did not defer to any other teacher for information about students and/or parents; however, when it came to parents of color during her student teaching, Lindsay heard two negative stereotypes. She stated that she had heard that the parents in that district would not show up at conferences and that few parents would return phone calls.

When it came to race, Lindsay again, claimed that she received very little information from her teacher preparation program. So much so that she could not even recall the name of the one class where there had been some discussion about diversity. As with many universities, Lindsay was only required to take one multicultural course (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). She explained that she learned that “you have to be, like, culturally sensitive and culturally responsive because certain cultures are, like,
‘the teacher is now in control.’” She explained that she learned that she should not take offense to cultural difference. Lindsay explained that some parents might believe that teachers have no role in disciplining children. “People might sometimes feel like you’re trying to step on [them] like they’re the parent and you’re the teacher.” She reiterated that she learned that one has to respect cultural differences. In the teacher preparation program, they “talked about how you have to like – sometimes- you can’t take it personally. It’s what they [parents] just think - that type of thing. We talked a lot about that.”

Lindsay identified her student teaching placement as a diverse setting. She used the term “also” indicating that she believed there to be a similarity between Crimson Rock and her student teaching placement. Lindsay discussed her job search and how she ended up working in Crimson Rock. While she initially explained that she applied to every job possible, she also stated that she was looking for a place with racial diversity. She hesitated in her explanation and stated that her job placement “was kind of like what [she] was looking for.” It seemed like she wanted to project that she had chosen to work in a racially diverse community even though economic limitations drove her job search.

**Lindsay’s Expectations of Parents**

In the first interview, Lindsay supplied traditional expectations of parental involvement. Lindsay discussed parental outreach in traditional terms such as calling/e-mailing home with problems. She acknowledged that contacting parents (calling and e-mailing) was uncomfortable for her at that point in the school year. She preferred e-mail, but realized that given the socioeconomic status of the town that not all parents used e-mail/internet. She explained that parents needed to be proactive in order to reduce
problems (defined as behavioral) in the classroom. She believed that parents needed to return teacher phone calls, attend conferences, and check their children’s homework (Winters, 1993). Lindsay planned to call home for both positive and negative behaviors. She felt that making parents aware that she wanted them to call her with concerns would help build support at home.

Even though classroom management was not a particular targeted aspect of this project, I found importance in understanding the context through which Lindsay was approaching her first year of teaching. As with many novice teachers, Lindsay referenced classroom management throughout her first interview. It became obvious that she viewed successful teaching as successful discipline (Bullough et al., 1991; Onafowora, 2004). Parents were a means to help with classroom management. She gave out her e-mail on the syllabus that she sent home to be signed and returned. She stated, “that way, if you go back and you know both parents are like…well we didn’t know that she [the student] had to do this – like every assignment is on there and you signed this paper. So it saves my back…like I had them sign it, it said it on there.” She saw the information on her syllabus as a means of “sav[ing] her back” if a parent argued that he/she was unaware of certain rules/assignments. Additionally, Lindsay thought that students and parents would not see her as evil if she made good and bad phone calls. She stated that a teacher needed to get “parents on [his/her] side” so they do not think of the teacher as “evil.” Lindsay worried about parents becoming dissatisfied with her (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005) and believed they needed to be won over to her “side.” She reflected on a couple positive interactions with parents during her student teaching where they agreed that the students’ behavior was unacceptable and that collaborative efforts would be made to ensure
improvement. She later referred to these parental interactions as a team-like approach when it came to behavior. Lindsay did not outline any specific ways that she could ensure that she and parents work together, but she obviously had an image of successful teamwork with parents and a fear of being blamed.

When discussing parents of color, Lindsay indicated that she had not planned to interact any differently with them than with white parents. She was obviously aware of their race and their possible perception of her, but overall she could not think of any particular methods of supporting or enhancing relationships with parents of color. When it came to Spanish-speaking parents, Lindsay had no plan for contacting those parents. She indicated that she knew that some parents were only Spanish speakers, but “thinking about calling those parents, you know, I don’t know exactly what I’m going to do.” She stated that the school had not provided the protocol for contacting non-English speaking parents and admitted that she did not know of any resources/translation services (as she had as a student teacher).

Lindsay explained that she felt that parents of different races might judge her by her white appearance. She preferred phone/email contact because the parents could not see her. She believed that that would help them take her more seriously when they actually met. It was obvious that Lindsay was aware of her race, and that parents, too, might have been aware of her race. In the same train of thought, she explained that she was “nervous” about back-to-school night because all the parents would be staring at her. She stated “I think something that I’m nervous about is definitely back-to-school night cause they’re all staring at you…so that kind of gives me a little anxiety” While she did not explicitly state parents of color, it was within the same discussion of being judged by
parents of color that she identified her anxiety about speaking in front of parents.

**Current Influencing Factors**

Since the research questions were directed towards understanding how novice teachers come to construct images of parents of color and their involvement, it was important to unpack the influential agents in the first year of teaching. Lindsay explained that almost all of her colleagues were older, white females. According to Lindsay, there were only a handful of brand new teachers, almost no teachers with 6-10 years of experience, and the majority were veterans with 18-25 years of experience in Crimson Rock. She was told at her hiring that “usually people stay forever” in the district.

Lindsay expressed frustration at the lack of support from other teachers (Gordon, 1991). She stated when “you go to the older teachers and sometimes I feel like they feel bothered that you’re like starting from the beginning. And then the young teachers you can’t go to because they’re in the same boat as you.” It seemed that Lindsay did not feel welcome by or comfortable approaching veteran teachers. And, while novice teachers might have wanted to help, Lindsay saw them as uninformed. Lindsay believed that teachers with 6-10 years of experience would have been the ideal group to give her help, but few to none existed in the district.

Unless specifically prompted, Lindsay never referenced her mentor teacher, a white woman who was also her supervisor. Even though Lindsay stated that her mentor was nice, it did not seem that she could have easily approached her for advice. Lindsay described her mentor as an “abrasive person” and their conversations as very direct. There was no indication that Lindsay felt comfortable discussing issues (beyond teaching materials) with her mentor.
Lindsay clearly felt a divide between the veteran teachers (including her mentor) and herself. This divide manifested itself in the ways that she understood race in the school. She desired a group of young teachers who might be able to share experiences with her. She stated that she desired to “talk about [race] with other, like, young teachers. I feel it would be more productive and I’d feel more comfortable…like if I had something that I thought they could either just spell it out for me or you know say, ‘I have this experience’…like they’re all white females too…so they could say, ‘no you know I’ve had this experience’ or ‘yeah kind of feeling the same thing.’ At least it would make me feel better or like get it out of my head.” She believed that other young white female teachers could have stated that they too had “this experience” or that they could have told her “yeah, kind of feeling the same thing.” Her desire for empathy became apparent. Her position of “other” also became apparent as she felt that she had nowhere to turn for advice (Stanulis, Fallona, & Pearson, 2002).

At the beginning of the year, Lindsay spent very little time discussing other teachers in connection to race and parents. When it came to directed questions about what she had heard from teachers, Lindsay provided a limited glimpse into the school culture. Without revealing the source(s), Lindsay explained that she had heard that parents of color were not helpful, rarely called back, and few attended conferences. Additionally, she stated that she had heard that Hispanic parents expected teachers to discipline and educate their children. Essentially, Hispanic parents dropped off their kids and left the responsibility to the teacher. The teacher became both the “parent and teacher once [he/she] enter[ed] at 7:50.” Lindsay specifically emphasized that she believed that Latinos had respect for teachers, not a lack of care for their children. “I don’t think it’s
that they…I’ve heard not that they don’t care, they feel like you’re qualified. It’s almost a respect thing…They’re very respected [teachers] and so whatever is going on in there, you [the student] should be listening and you should be doing your work. It’s like their [teachers’h] job to discipline and educate you. And, so you [the student] better not go against what they say. I’ve never heard it in a poor light…only in a positive light. But I guess it could be taken in a poor light if you feel like everything is on you [the teacher].”

Lindsay was clear to state that these comments were not said in a bad way, even though she knew that they could be taken that way. It appeared that Lindsay was covering up for what she feared might have been underlying racism from her coworkers. Lindsay was trying to assure that negative stereotyping did not exist in her school, and therefore could not have impacted her perceptions of parents of color. Lindsay had an awareness that race probably mattered, but was averse to discussing it.

Lindsay explained that other staff members discussed the low parental involvement in the district, but avoided race-based conclusions. She stated that “I have heard from many that no matter what the activity, academic or recreational, parent activity and involvement is very low.” She stated that it was not due to race, that all parents in the district (regardless of race) acted the same way towards the school. In connection to those comments, Lindsay concluded that parents were not involved in their children’s lives. She was not expecting such low numbers at the beginning of the school year and acted with a surprised disappointment at the lack of parental involvement. Her own expectations of successful parental involvement were not met. She was disappointed and ultimately echoed the comments of her colleagues, adopting what Scott (1990) refers to as the public transcript, which the new teacher is likely to adopt.
Lindsay was unable to provide much information about the school’s expectations and views on parents of color. She stated that she received a faculty handbook but not an explanation of anything in it having to do with parents. There was no set of expectations about how to communicate with parents, parents of color, or non-English speaking parents. She (wrongly) believed that the website was translatable. Lindsay realized that not everything would be translated and that Spanish-speaking parents did not receive all of the same information as English speaking parents in Crimson Rock. She stated that anything that was “definitely pertaining to them [Spanish-speaking parents]…[was] translated.” Lindsay understood that Spanish-speaking parents did not have the same access to the school (i.e., they only got what pertained to them) as English speakers. Overall, Lindsay recognized that the district did not provide guidelines for her and that it did not accommodate parents, especially socioeconomically disadvantaged ones. At this point in the year, Lindsay seemed to be uncertain of how responsible she was for parental involvement, and who, if anyone, was responsible in the district.

Analysis of Lindsay’s Immersion into Crimson Rock

In the beginning of her year, it was clear that Lindsay’s personal background, upbringing, schooling, and teacher preparation program shaped the ways that she saw school and consequently the role of parents in the school system. She had a clear view of parental involvement as being defined by contact with the teacher, helping with homework, and attending school events. While Lindsay claimed that her teacher preparation program did not teach her much about parents and/or race, it was evident that she referred back to lessons that she learned from the university. Additionally, even though Lindsay claimed she felt comfortable in diverse settings, she was not free from
awareness. She was hyperaware of her race and anxious that parents would be negatively aware of her race.

Additionally, the current influences in her life affected her perceptions of parents in Crimson Rock. While Lindsay was clearly struggling with issues of isolation, she did interact with other teachers. These teachers, including her mentor, were primarily white, veteran female teachers whom Lindsay found somewhat unapproachable. Lindsay’s perceptions of parents of color were affected by her colleagues’ comments. She verbalized their lowered expectations of parents of color and specifically reiterated their image of Latino parents’ attitudes towards teachers. Furthermore, in her initial journal and interview responses, Lindsay expressed that the school had not conveyed clear expectations of its teachers and that she did not know what her obligations should have been to parents. As the initial sources of data revealed, Lindsay was attempting to understand what she needed to do in the context of the school, in connection to the staff, and in relation to her past experiences and education.

**Middle of the Year: Finding her Place**

As the year progressed, Lindsay was becoming a member of the school community at Crimson Rock High School. First, I report Lindsay’s sense of self within the school community. Next, I discuss her willingness to draw conclusions based on race and other teachers. Then, I discuss her overall views of and experiences with parents and parental involvement. Finally, I analyze her views, expectations, and conclusions of parents of color in relation to her socialization.

**Isolation and Socialization**

As Lindsay entered the middle part of the year, she continued to feel isolated from
her peers (Anhorn, 2008; Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). As part of the socialization process, Lindsay grew from true isolation to building a select few connections within the school. She attempted to maintain a friendly demeanor and gain acceptance (Anhorn, 2008), but clearly did not fully trust her colleagues.

In the winter, Lindsay explained that she did not really interact with many teachers unless she made a concerted effort to do so. She stated that, “that’s one that is bad about my school. I don’t really interact with anybody.” Lindsay limited her interaction with other teachers by spending most of her free time in the office/science preparatory room adjacent to her classroom, essentially isolated herself (Stanulis et al., 2002). She liked having her own space, as she was “not forced to go out of the room.” Additionally, Lindsay felt isolated because she was the only biology teacher in the chemistry wing of the school with almost all male teachers. She stated that she was “misplaced” and “isolated” because she did not belong by gender or content area. Specifically, she stated, “I’m misplaced because they’re short of rooms, science-wise…I’m all over the place, and I teach all of [my classes] in the chemistry rooms. So all the biology teachers are on the [other] floor…so I’m isolated as the only bio teacher with all chemistry teachers…so it’s me and all the guys” In regards to her interaction with the biology teachers, she stated that “the most interaction [she] ha[d] [was] like [she’d] go down there to talk about stuff with them like …if they [we]re making a test or starting a new chapter.” She interacted with them if she had to discuss content.

Lindsay also felt isolated by her age. Being in her early twenties, she described herself as “the baby” in the school. She stated, “I’m like the baby. Everybody else is like the next youngest person to…cause I’m twenty-three and the next person is twenty-nine
and I act like I’m twenty-five…It’s more of an older faculty. People come in and stay.” She described the faculty as an “older faculty” where “people come in and stay.” Lindsay expressed that even though there were some new teachers in the school, she was still really young and did not have the opportunity to interact with the other younger teachers because they taught in other subjects. She stated that it was hard to “go and mingle with everybody.”

Unless directly asked, Lindsay barely mentioned her mentor. Her mentor had “been [t]here forever…she’s one of them.” Lindsay obviously felt a divide from her mentor. She explained that her mentor was also her supervisor, which complicated their relationship. She stated, her mentor “knows how to get stuff done - what to do, but as a mentor, she’s not very good just because she’s also like the supervisor…she’s got so much going on that she really can’t…like unless I hound her kind of sometimes like it’s not like she means to but she gets up in so much else.” Clearly, her supervisor was more concerned with efficiency than a relationship. She explained that her mentor had “so much going on that she really can’t” take the time to sit down with her. She did not go to her mentor for discipline or parental issues. Her mentor more-or-less checked that she had submitted paperwork and followed any school directives. Lindsay expressed that she understood that her mentor was busy and tried not to bother her too much. Even though Lindsay acknowledged that there were time expectations and meeting requirements in the mentoring relationship, she clearly indicated that her mentor did not fulfill those. Her mentor “squeeze[d] stuff in there where it’s suppose to be…it’s not really exactly what it should be, like time wise and stuff.” And, she stated that the meetings did not feel like “friends” which appeared to be disappointing to Lindsay. Lindsay repeatedly expressed
that her mentor was “okay,” “fine,” and “good, but…” It appeared that their mentoring relationship was dominated by the supervisory position that her mentor also held.

As the year progressed, Lindsay built some relationships and contacts with other teachers. She had two inclusion co-teachers, both friendly, and one in particular had provided her with many teaching resources. It did not seem that she developed very strong relationships with those co-teachers. Lindsay built a friendship with a chemistry teacher named Scott, a veteran teacher who had “been there forever.” He served as a surrogate mentor, as he was extremely helpful and willing to answer any questions. He used stories of past students and classes to help Lindsay with hers. Lindsay also became friends with a twenty-nine year old teacher, Jen, in her department. They had a close connection and often vented to each other. She was more open with Jen than with anyone else in the school and would express her feelings on the school and other teachers. For example, she would “go to [Jen] and be like ‘oh, my god!’…‘what the hell is her [another teacher’s] problem?’” Lindsay only felt comfortable complaining about other teachers to Jen.

In the spring, it became clear that Lindsay had built more connections in the school. She was more aware of what other teachers were saying and doing. She had pinpointed a few teachers to avoid because of their “coldness.” She also seemed to be well-informed on the stories and gossip about another teacher who everyone thought would probably get fired.

As the political-economic climate in New Jersey intensified because of impending state budget cuts, Lindsay seemed to be more in touch with what was happening in her school. She stated that “people had all these outlandish” ideas. She explained as a “new
teacher [she] just kind of kept up.” It was not until the early spring that Lindsay had even mentioned the union; however, very quickly the word “union” became threaded throughout her responses. Lindsay was acutely aware of what veteran teachers (she referenced these teachers as having 10-15 years experience and more) were saying about the impending budget proposal (and cuts). She had had direct conversations with them where they warned her that she would probably receive a Reduction in Force (RIF) letter indicating that her job was in jeopardy for the following school year. Lindsay trusted their words since they had history in the district. She explained that when the veterans told her “when [they] first came here, you got a RIF notice every single year if you weren’t a tenured teacher. So it wasn’t anything big. Oh great, they gave you your RIF notice or whatever. But they [the district] stopped doing that once the budget passed for many years, and then like tenure became like more… I think more critiqued back then…So for them to giving our RIF notices out, they had to be…serious.” Furthermore, she felt the veterans had good intentions in warning her, but was frustrated that she had to hear from “ten people” that her job was at risk. “I think their intentions were good, but when have like ten people telling you, you’re like ‘okay, okay!’ Now you’re making me over think it. You know what I mean? There’s nothing I can do. I’m either going to stay or not. Nothing is going to change that.” Lindsay believed that the veteran teachers made the time even tenser and scarier than it already was. Later in the spring, Lindsay expressed relief that she had not received a RIF letter and that the budget in Crimson Rock had passed. Approximately 55 jobs had been cut in the district. It seemed that Lindsay resented the veteran teachers for making her so nervous. She knew that they had “good intentions,” but she had tired of hearing their warnings about her job security
Through the spring, Lindsay maintained that she felt like she did not share much in common with the veteran teachers. The age gap seemed to be a concern for her, as she stated that many of them were as old, if not older, than her own parents. She stated, “The other women, they’re all really nice, but it’s just weird because they’re like - which probably makes me feel so bad – but they’re my parents age and there’s such a gap. Do you know what I mean?...It’s just we’re from different – well we do different things in our spare time obviously…They ask me about stuff and whatever” She was in a different stage in her life and shared nothing in common with them. She felt that they would “play nice” and ask her questions about her life, but that there was an obvious disconnect. She worried that if she shared any personal information that it would turn into gossip and become quickly distorted. Lindsay would hold back on her thoughts until she really knew somebody. She worried about the “trickle-effect” (or gossiping) where something she might say would end up being distorted. Lindsay worried about damaging her own reputation or being perceived as inadequate (Gordon, 1991; Weasmer & Woods, 2000).

Lindsay not only felt isolated within her school, but by the springtime, she was unsure if the profession was even the right choice for her (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). She felt different than others who knew that teaching was their lifetime goal. Lindsay explained that she planned to teach for another year or two and then would think about going back to school. Lindsay explained, “there’s things I hate about it [teaching] though. I definitely don’t want to stay in forever, and I knew that going into it. I wanted to do it, I can do it for a while, but it’s not – I feel like some people this is what I do. I don’t feel that way about it.” As she struggled to make sense of this choice, she refused to discuss her feelings inside of the building. She described herself as a “people-pleaser to a
fault sometimes.” So, while Lindsay expressed serious discontent with her job, she stated that she “put on a happy face for everybody else in the department.” She thought that she had done a good job at faking happiness and that her department members would not have known in “a million years” that she really did not like her job. “I want to keep it that way cause I feel like also if people are like ‘if she doesn’t like it, then we can get somebody that does like it.’” Essentially, she explained that faking happiness was simply a means to secure her job. She knew that she had a good situation and did not want to ruin it by revealing her unhappiness to other teachers.

Lindsay directly stated that she received most of her support and advice from outside of the school, and only used other colleagues for integral information about school protocol. Lindsay respected other teachers’ opinions and experiences, but often felt that their situations did not exactly apply to hers. However by late winter, Lindsay had sought out advice from other teachers, specifically on how to handle troublesome students in her last period class.

By late spring, she felt that she was becoming “more social with the younger faculty” and considered two young female teachers to be friends of hers. She stated that she was more open with them than anyone else in the school. Lindsay took comfort that her friends felt the same way that she did. She shared anecdotes and funny stories that involved her new friends in the school. She continued to rely on the veteran teacher, Scott, for advice, especially with her last period class. She stated that he felt “so bad for [her] because [the students] [we]re pretty nuts.” She was pleased that a veteran teacher was able to validate that the problem was the students, not her.

**Parental Involvement**
Throughout the middle portion of the year, Lindsay maintained traditional modes of parental contact, such as conferences, calling, and e-mailing. She regarded involved parents as those who e-mailed her and/or set up meetings through the guidance department. As the year progressed, Lindsay still “d[id] not like to call” and consequently received few voicemails. At that point in the year, Lindsay said that she had made approximately 10-15 phone calls, but too many emails to count. She stated that parents of all races would email. Additionally, since there was no system for acquiring parent email addresses, she only had access to the addresses of parents who attended back-to-school night and/or conferences. She stated that “for the most part” she had the email addresses of the parents that she needed. When first asked, she felt like she had interacted with roughly a fifth of her students’ parents (approximately 20 parents), then she said 25-30%, then a little less than half. It was unclear if she was negatively exaggerated at first or amending her answer to sound more positive.

Lindsay mostly saw parents as part of a routine to curb negative classroom behavior. As a novice teacher, she struggled to maintain her position of authority and execute control over her classes. She would reach out to parents regarding their children’s misbehavior in her class and excessive absences, as per the school policy. Lindsay would use contacting home as a threat to students. She felt that it allowed her leverage when talking to the parents since she could say that she tried “A, B, and C” before contacting home.

**Views on Parents of Color**

Lindsay became increasingly more comfortable discussing the identities, expectations, and roles of parents of color in the school. She drew conclusions on black,
white, and Latino parents throughout the middle of the year. Early in the winter, she stated that she does “not get to interact with nearly as many white parents as African American” and that she “interact[ed] with more guardians of color and they [we]re more proactive.” Accordingly, she had no regular interactions with white parents, but parents of color would e-mail her weekly/biweekly for progress updates. She also had conferences with parents of color in guidance, but not with white parents. She seemed to be indicating that parents of color were the involved ones, not the white parents.

In the wintertime, according to her journal responses, white parents were friendly and did not disagree, however, she did not see them as being proactive in their children’s lives. Referencing white parents, she stated that, “the ones I have interacted with are very friendly and [took] what I say with no disagreement. There are none that are very active in their children's academic standing though. I receive emails and meetings, but none have been with white children/parents.” White parents were less direct and reluctant to hand over the reigns to her as the teacher. She felt that white parents did not question her; however, it appeared that white parents wanted to grant permission to the teacher.

Lindsay believed that parents of color were always supportive of her as the teacher. She felt like she had not met any opposition from parents of color. She viewed parents of color as proactive, direct, and trusting of her intentions. She indicated that white parents were not as “blunt” and “direct” as parents of color. In a journal response, Lindsay explained that, “my students with white parents were not so blunt or direct with giving me the ability to work with their children.” Lindsay stated that parents of color gave her permission to do whatever it takes to get their children to behave. She joked that a mother told her to “smack him [her son] if he’s bad.” Parents of color told her to reach out to
them right away, to keep their children after class, and jokingly to “smack” the child if he misbehaves. According to Lindsay, parents of color relinquished more authority to her, as they encouraged her to take any action that she felt necessary to benefit their children.

However, later in a springtime interview, she seemingly shifted her constructions of parents (or became more vocal about her beliefs). She stated that white parents would contact her first, while she would have to reach out to parents of color. She stated that she had not called home on any white students since their misbehavior was minor (i.e., chatting, not doing homework). She provided an anecdote about a white boy who was earning a 78% in her class whose parents made him come for extra help. “This one student, he has a 78% and his parents were like appalled. Like they feel that he should have a ninety. But he came in the next day. He stayed after. He wanted to know what work he could make up. He wasn’t - not like he was talking at all, but even after - like he was focused on me after that.” This example led into her stating that, “I feel like they [white parents] have more pull. I don’t know why, but pull with their kid. Like if I send an email home saying this, it’ll change.” She explained that if she sent an e-mail to a white parent that the problem would change opposed to parents of color where she would not see such an immediate change in the student’s behavior/effort. It appeared that Lindsay’s perceptions of parents of color had shifted in a few months time from overly supportive of parents of color to dismissive of them as non-proactive agents.

Lindsay elaborated by explaining that the majority of her discipline problems were with boys of color. She did explain that due to her high percentage of students of color, it made sense that her discipline problems would be with them. When she called home, one black mother simply apologized and expressed her own frustration with the
child’s behavior. Lindsay believed that calling home should have worked, but the child’s behavior got worse. She stated that it was all part of the “same routine” of assigning detention and calling home, but it did not produce results. It seemed that she based her conclusion of parental efficacy on improving grades (for white parents) and improving behavior (for parents of color).

Further along in the year, she started to draw deeper and, for the first time, negative conclusions based on race. Hale (2001) argues that white parents (and specifically not black mothers) give middle class support to their children that reflects the school’s desires. Lindsay specifically explained how white parents gave the most support to their children. She explained that there was a difference between white parents and parents of color. She stated that Latino parents “have dealt with it kind of like ‘do what you’ve got to do…we’re going to not literally kill you, but I’m going to try if you don’t do what you’ve got to do.’ Black parents, I feel like, it’s more ‘you better shape up.’ They give them [their kids] this speech, but the Hispanic parents have meetings and put the fear of God in them. So that works.” She concluded that black parents gave the speech of “you better shape up” to their children. She felt that Latino parents “put the fear of God” in their children and it would work, while black parents would give the lecture but there would be no fear behind it. Latino students, without question, would know that they had to do their work since those parents instilled fear and respect that resulted in improvement. She provided an anecdote about a mother who simply told the Latino child she would tell his father if he did not improve his grade and he did.

As the year progressed, Lindsay still did not know how to contact non-English speaking parents. It appeared that she had not sought out any advice on that topic.
Lindsay recognized it as a problem, but had no solution nor had made any attempt at figuring out the solution. She was also unsure of the accommodations for, and consequently the role of, Spanish-speaking parents in the community. She knew that information was not disseminated in Spanish, but still (wrongly) believed that webpage was translatable.

Lindsay provided several examples of black parents not succeeding. Lindsay told an anecdote about a black mother from whom she had not gained any help even though they had spoken several times. The mother “[didn’t] know what to do either.” Another mother of color was described as being “at her wit’s end. Her son’s failing everything. He’s a black kid.” And also, Lindsay told a story about a set of black parents whom she believed pretended like they had no idea that their child had been acting up in all of his classes. After months of trying to contact the parents, they finally came in for a meeting. “When they came in here, I think they did the ‘play dumb’ act to not look stupid or feel as stupid.” She felt that they were trying to save face and “play dumb” as if they had not gotten any messages about his behavior or that he was failing most of his classes.

By this point in the year, she felt that black parents did not tell their children that they could do it. She felt that black parents did not encourage their children in the most effective way. “When I hear them speak to them [their children], it’s not like ‘you can do it’… it’s like ‘you should be doing this’ and blah, blah, blah. Not ‘you can do this.’” According to her, black parents said, “you should be doing this” opposed to “you can do it.” Lindsay thought that the distinction in encouragement between black parents and white parents caused the cycle of failure to continue. Lindsay discussed the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy affecting black students. She stated that they “feel like they’re
supposed to do that so they do that….like they don’t put effort into it because they feel like that’s what they’re supposed to do.”

For the majority of the middle part of her first year, Lindsay adhered to her belief that white parents and parents of color shared the same role in the school. She remained averse to discussing race as important or recognizing her own whiteness (Loutzenheiser, 2003). While she had already pointed out differences in the ways that white parents and parents of color interact with the school, she still insisted that there was no noticeable difference. However, in a springtime interview, she stated that parents of color were “not that involved at all really. I can think of…I’d say the majority of black students and not that many – like I have two sets of parents that keep in contact with me.” She emphasized that only two sets of black parents had stayed in contact with her. It appeared that her initial positive conclusions about the parents of color as being involved had transformed into negative generalizations about parents of color not being involved.

Lindsay’s first reaction to questions about race was to say race did not affect her or her job. It appeared that she desired a race-neutral approach by which colorblindness would excuse away any possibility of her being perceived as racist because she was rejecting notions of white privilege (Jenson, 2005). Specifically, she explained that being white did not impact her interactions with parents primarily due to the format (i.e., phone or email). She did not recognize that her own whiteness might have affected her treatment of them opposed to their treatment of her. She excused away the importance of race by saying that parents of color supported her in face-to-face conferences. Lindsay was not aware that her identity as a white woman shaped her experiences, as it seemed that she saw herself (and the white race) as being culturally devoid (McDermott &
She then later contradicted herself by stating that *race does matter* and that by changing races that she would have had a different type of relationship with parents. Lindsay stated that if she were of color that she might have been able to communicate more easily and naturally with parents of color. She responded in a journal writing that “I think that I may be able to communicate with them [parents of color] more easily at times or have them come to talk to me more just because it is natural to feel more comfortable with people that are like you. Yet then I could have more white parents feel isolated from me so I think either way you are eliminating a connection between some parents.” She thought that if she were a person of color that it might have made parents of color feel more comfortable approaching her. There, obviously, existed some belief that white people and people of color are different in the way that they communicate, which may rest on the idea that white communication practices are the norm (Nakayama & Martin, 2007). However, she realized that changing her race would have then disconnected her from white parents, with whom she currently had an automatic connection. She believed that race did affect a teacher’s interactions (specifically hers) with parents, but had difficulty admitting it.

**Echoing Colleagues**

In the winter, when it came to race, she stated that the teachers at her school really just concerned themselves with teaching and not race. She said that she was “surprised” that she had not witnessed any racism from other teachers (or anyone, actually) in the school. “Nothing at all really. No kind of anything. Which I’m quite surprised because going into this school, I really did kind of think…I was nervous in the beginning. And it
didn’t play a role at all, so I’m pleasantly surprised.” She was unable to identify any racist acts because she had not witnessed any overt acts (Lee & Sims, 2008b). She explained that it was possible that they thought racist ideas, but did not vocalize them. She felt that she had “heard enough conversations about parents” at that point that if there was any racism, she would have heard it by then. She admitted that other teachers felt that the most significant problem in the district was that parents did not care and that there was “no parental interaction.” Lindsay agreed that it was “true…across the board there is not parental interaction.”

At first, Lindsay avoided drawing conclusions about race and directed lack of involvement to be a result of socioeconomics. She excused away comments that she heard as not being her personal philosophy and that statements might or might not have been intended in a racist way. She left room for both sides of the argument and was reluctant to identify race as a factor in the comments that she heard. Again, she displayed an aversion to acknowledging that race mattered. However, by spring, Lindsay was willing to deduce that race mattered to other teachers. She stated that she had never heard racial terms being used, but that when she read between the lines that she knew that race was an underlying issue in some conversations. Without specifically mentioning names or titles, she stated that people generalized complaints that parents were not involved at the school. She reported that other teachers “said things like, there [wa]s no parental contribution at this school, the parents [we]re not active, they [id] not seem to care. Although it [wa]s never mention[ed] about the color, [she] assume[d], due to the demographics, it [wa]s referring to parents of color.” Lindsay seemed to be picking up the invisible whiteness (Levine-Rasky, 2000) and system of white privilege that grants
white people power (Kendall, 2006) in her school. The code of ‘not caring’ emerged in how the staff thought about parents of color (Lopez, G.R., 2003). She herself began to connect ‘caring’ with being active (in traditional white, middle class definition) at the school.

Lindsay’s identity as a novice teacher manifested itself through her desire to agree with what others have to say. While it seemed that she did not whole-heartedly believe the comments and generalizations about parental involvement in the district, she hesitantly agreed with them. She stated, “I did not really react. I guess I agreed with the majority of comments in the sense that many of the parents are not active in the school or with their children.” Because of her position as a novice teacher, she did not feel that she had the agency to disagree with veteran teachers/staff. She had seemingly begun to learn the acceptable frontstage discourse (Goffman, 1959) that would allow her acceptance into her community.

Echoing her coworkers, Lindsay began drawing conclusions about the district as a whole. She stated that some parents were continuously active in the district, but overwhelmingly, many parents “don’t say or do anything. Even if you reach out, there’s not much of a response.” As the year progressed, she lamented that she did not work in a school where parents were involved. Lindsay was “so sad” that parents did not come to events at the school. “I was so sad. I went to a couple of things and there were more teachers than parents, and this was the student-faculty basketball game where…I mean it’s all seniors. At my school, we had one and the gym was packed.” She seemed to pity the children of these parents (Bullough et al., 1991) who were clearly different than her own experience with parents during high school. By the spring, Lindsay generalized that
parents were not active in the school and did not attempt to become involved. She stated that she was unsure of the reason, but stated that the school is ‘hands-off’ in that area. It appeared that she placed some blame on the school for not involving more parents.

As the year progressed, Lindsay’s conclusions on parents became increasingly more negative and echoed the words of her colleagues. Her comments developed from complaints about parents not calling back to parents not caring enough to initiate contact when their child was failing. She felt that parents were “MIA” for most of the marking period, but would surely reappear because they would be ‘suddenly’ concerned with their child passing for the year. “It’s like they faded and now they’re going to care when they see their grade.” Other teachers would explain that they faced similar issues with reaching out to parents. Parents would not answer the phone, return phone calls, or their numbers were disconnected. When discussing failing students, Lindsay explained that she simply did not know how parents could do nothing about it. “I don’t know how they can be getting a report card and seeing this repeatedly and not do anything. I don’t know.” When asked what kind of support these students were getting at home, she responded with “Nothing. I highly doubt it.” She concluded that they were getting absolutely no support at home. Later on, she stated that she could not be frustrated by parents because they were basically nonexistent and not “a contributing factor to anything.”

To a certain degree, Lindsay desired to resist the dominant views on parents. She explained that the school required her to send home “message-grams” to parents regarding behavior, academics, attendance, etc. She continued on to state that she didn’t “want to say they don’t care cause I don’t want to think like that because that’s kind of like…but it just feels like they just don’t care. I mean I don’t know why else you
wouldn’t call or email the student’s teacher if they’re saying there’s behavior problems, they’re failing, whatever.” Lindsay was unwilling to say that it was a lack of care, but it was obvious that she felt that way. Lindsay appeared to be frustrated with and disenfranchised by the process, stating that she felt like “well you did what you could do…at least I know I tried.”

Lindsay began to echo her coworkers, specifically through her resentment on a new policy that would have allowed parents to access the teachers’ online gradebooks. There was definitely bitterness towards parents who were perceived as making no real contribution to the school, but were being rewarded with access to what the teachers believed to be their personal business. She heard a teacher state that it “made me really mad. They can check my gradebook like all the time, but they can never respond to anything.” The effect of these gripes on Lindsay became very evident in her own feelings on the matter. She almost verbatim repeated the thoughts of the other teachers. While she did not share the same history with parents as did veteran teachers, she spoke as if she had a long past to validate her feelings. She explained that she worried that it would become a way to put teachers (particularly her) on the spot to explain grades to parents. “You’re now going to have to explain like every single time a kid didn’t do a homework or didn’t do well on a test. It is their right to know a certain kid, but it’s like jumping into your - almost like your personal thing. I don’t know I feel like I’m going to spend so much time now fighting off parents as to why I’m failing their student…justifying my teaching.” Clearly, she worried it would cause her to “fight off parents” as she would have had to “justify” her grades. Not only did Lindsay echo the veteran concerns and views on parents, but she also saw the proposed policy as a threat to her as a novice
Analysis of Lindsay Finding her Place

As her year continued, Lindsay clearly was struggling to find her identity as a novice teacher in connection with her teacher preparation program (Stanulis et al., 2002). She was overwhelmed with the workload of teaching, because she felt that her teacher education program did not prepare her for the realities of teaching. She felt that her teacher preparation program had been “a good program - but for the school that I work in, it’s a little idealistic” in its presentation of parents, culture, and pedagogy. At this point, she realized that not all parents were going to reach out or even call back and that the limited information that she had received on culture was based on stereotypes. Her disillusionment had quickly faded as she was faced with the reality of being a teacher (Flores, 2006a).

As she struggled to face the realities of the profession, she was also undergoing the socialization process at the school to become a member of her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the winter she still felt isolated (Anhorn, 2008) since she existed on the periphery of the school. However, by the spring she had made several friendships and was aware of the happenings of the building. She did not find the school-provided resources of a mentor teacher and a new teacher committee particularly helpful. Instead, Lindsay seemed to gather most of her information from the select colleagues whom she trusted.

As the year progressed, Lindsay became increasingly more comfortable discussing the expectations, roles, and involvements of parents. She drew firmer conclusions on the types of involvement that can be expected from different races. She
concluded that white parents deferred less to teachers than parents of color and had more of a direct effect on their children. She expressed that parents of color cared and were concerned with their children; however, as the year continued, she had noticed that they did not encourage their children in the “right” way. Lindsay used white codes of normalcy to judge the effectiveness of parents of color. She felt that parents of color did not tell their children that they could succeed, but rather demanded that they did.

According to Lindsay, parents of color gave the authority to the teacher and allowed him/her to do what he/she needed to. However, it seemed that she did not feel that parents of color caused enough change in their children. Lindsay’s earlier positive comments on parents of color started to transform into negative conclusions of them not being supportive in the right way and generalizations of them not being involved or caring (Lopez, G.R., 2003).

Overall, she was clearly disappointed by what she considered to be a lack of involvement and lack of care by all parents. She echoed the concerns of other teachers and drew similar conclusions about the nonexistent role of parents in the district. While it seemed that Lindsay had many examples of parental involvement, she still claimed that parental involvement was nonexistent in the school. Throughout the middle portion of her year, as the socialization process acted on her, Lindsay began accepting that race might have mattered in regards to parental involvement.

End of the Year: Gaining Acceptance

At the end of the year, Lindsay reflected on her first complete year of teaching and discussed her plans for the following year. Lindsay informed me that she would be returning to the same district and would have the same courses. While the budget had
affected jobs in her district, not all of the anticipated cuts had come to fruition. She anticipated a new superintendent and a new principal, but emphasized the district’s stability, since its employees stayed for long periods of time. She expected to remain one of the newer teachers in the high school.

**Sense of Belonging**

By the end of the year, Lindsay still felt like she did not quite belong; however, her anecdotes supported that she was becoming a member of the school community, or rather her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). More than ever before, she spoke as if she was a member of her department and of the school. While Lindsay stated that she was only friendly with a couple of the other new teachers, she had definitely built relationships with other coworkers and had begun to understand the underlying practices, relationships, and interactions that drove her school’s culture. As she reflected on the year, Lindsay expressed a sense belonging to her district, and consequently had undergone *legitimation*, or rather the process of belonging to one’s profession (Olesen & Wittaker, 1968).

She did not feel that she received a great deal of support from the school as a novice teacher (Flores, 2006b). There were only two forms of support that the school offered: the new teacher committee and a mentor. She felt that the new teacher meetings were off-topic and unhelpful to the specific concerns of new teachers. When discussing her mentor, she stated that her mentor was “not bad, not good… “some people have great mentors and some people don’t have great mentors.” She and her mentor rarely discussed parents or parents of color, as they talked mostly about school protocol. A friend in another district had a very different first-year experience, with a structured mentoring
experience and built-in professional development. Lindsay’s knowledge of this mentoring program influenced her opinion of her own experience.

Lindsay recognized that isolation happened very easily at her school and that she needed to make a concerted effort to avoid that feeling (Fritz & Miller, 2003; McCann et al., 2005). She found comfort watching other isolated teachers branch out and build connections. She admitted that she was “in [her] own world…for the first like half of the year.” Essentially, at first, she did not talk to anyone, but by the end of the year she was consistently communicating with peers. Lindsay justified her year of isolation by stating that she felt that she really wanted to “figure out how to do [stuff] on her own” (Flores, 2006a).

As a new teacher, she was “afraid to be friends with anybody because you don’t know where you fit in exactly. That’s why I also wouldn’t want to say in this school for too long, because I don’t think it would ever…Like you are really in their clique or out, but even when you are in, it seems like within it…they talk about you or bad-mouth on another…and you don’t know where to stand.” Lindsay was skeptical of her veteran coworkers (Roehrig et al., 2002). She referenced two “spiteful” women in particular whom she distrusted, because she had watched them gossip about their so-called friends. Lindsay recommended that first-year teachers stay out of “teacher talk.” It was important not to “step in too much because [other teachers] will turn around and say something bad.” She felt it was more important to just focus on work, not socializing or making friends until the new teacher has been there for a few years. However, thinking about her second year of teaching, Lindsay stated that she wanted to work on meeting other teachers outside of her own department. She wanted to “go to more things or do more,
just like stop and say ‘hi’” to other teachers. While she recognized the danger of negative
teacher talk, she stated that she would advise a new teacher to “meet people from all
over.” Initially, she felt like she had to stay within her department, which made her feel
“trapped” until she realized that she could “go do [her] own thing.”

Even though Lindsay distrusted select members of her department, she still felt
that the “whole department ha[d] definitely gotten more coherent” by the end of school
year. She felt like she “was part of the whole thing.” Lindsay admitted that her sense of
isolation had suddenly begun to transform into a sense of belonging. “It was like by the
end, you feel like…even with some of the teachers, you feel like you have known them
for more than like eight months…in the beginning you are so like apprehensive and
everything is new.” She felt an allegiance to her department at the end of the year. She
provided an anecdote about a special education teacher that had taken credit for her
exam. She explained that her department disliked the Special Education department, so
she did not want to upset them with her story. Clearly, Lindsay was aware of the
interdepartmental relationships, was concerned about her department members’ feelings,
and seemed to have based her decision on loyalty and concern.

Additionally, Lindsay felt accepted by her community of practice, since she
believed that administration and veteran teachers had positive feelings towards her. The
administration would say “we’re glad to have you on” and other teachers would state that
she was one of the best hires. Lindsay was clearly proud of these accolades and it secured
her sense of belonging in the school. Since she desired to belong (Anhorn, 2008),
receiving positive feedback influenced her sense of security in the school and served as a
marker of her success.
Lindsay’s allegiance to the district emerged as she attempted to protect its reputation. When discussing what measures the district took concerning parental involvement, Lindsay stated that there was nothing more the district could do. She felt that it had exhausted all avenues and the parents were to blame for the lack of involvement. As Gerardo Lopez (2003) posits, the school becomes neutral and the parent (particularly of color) is blamed for lack of involvement. She repeatedly stated that she did not “know what else [the district] could do.” Additionally, in the middle of a negative story about Crimson Rock, Lindsay redirected and stated that the “school is not awful…like sometimes when I’m talking. It’s not that bad.” She continued on to explain that the school had “a lot of good kids, much more than bad kids or kids who are not doing well, like academically.” However, she continued by stating that “it was not as great as other schools…and you can’t compare yourself to them.” She did not wish to portray her school as a bad place with bad students and bad teachers. Lindsay seemed to be conflicted about her feelings towards her school, as she recognized that there were many flaws in her school, but still felt loyal to it.

**Parental Involvement**

Lindsay felt that she was successful with the parents that she was able to contact. However, she felt that she needed to be more consistent about reaching out to parents and following through on threats to students about calling home. She also wanted to increase the ‘good’ phone calls home. She stated that she had called a few times at the beginning of the year when “bad kids were doing really well” but lost steam as the year progressed. She felt that it was a way to win over parents and ensure a positive relationship.

Lindsay held to traditional expectations of teacher outreach like calling, e-
mailing, and sending progress reports. She took some responsibility as to the low parental response because she did not reach out as much as she could have. She felt that it was the teacher who “need[ed] to step up and make many attempts so parents realize [he/she is] there doing and helping the students so it would make them more likely to reciprocate.” In this response, it was clear that Lindsay was trying to resist the dominant thought that parents just did not care. As Scott (1990) posits, the new member to a community struggles to adopt the public transcript (or dominant/open interaction) of that particular group. Lindsay was still straddling two worlds (or assumptions about parents).

Lindsay referenced her teacher preparation program and student teaching far less in her final responses. She openly criticized her teacher preparation program for not really addressing parents, but emphasizing content instead. “A majority of my program is based on content – based on how to teach the content, I’d say like 90%-95%” of the program. She concluded that her program did not prepare for the reality of uninvolved parents. “I think my teacher preparation program did not really prepare me because the program itself, like I said – in a Utopian school…where the kids are oozing to learn, maybe it would work. You know what I mean? It’s just too perfect.” She felt that the program was ideological in its “warped” utopian image of school where students were “oozing to learn.” When she started to abandon the idealistic methods of the program (Flores, 2006a) that she initially felt like “the crappiest teacher ever.” She felt that the program’s emphasis on classroom management, parental involvement, and culturally responsive pedagogy was weak and underdeveloped.

**Echoing Other Teachers**

Lindsay felt that she was successful in interacting with parents of all races. She
stated, “I feel like I can form a bond with any of them, any race, any whatever, just making them feel like I’m not against you, like I am working with you.” According to Lindsay, white parents were involved how she had expected. Lindsay’s own whiteness framed her expectations of parents. Most of the white parents would contact her via email and she could only think of two in person conferences with white mothers. Lindsay noted that most of the in-person meetings were with black parents. She thought this percentage was logical as most of her students were black. She found that black parents would initiate the conference. Furthermore, she felt that she called more black parents, which might have accounted for the greater difficulty she had reaching black parents. “The ones [black parents] that did come in or email me back were like genuinely concerned and they would send the kids for extra help and check homework and do what they had to do.” She noted that the ones who did reply were “genuinely concerned,” implying that the others did not care.

In regards to Latino parents, Lindsay noted that she reluctantly reached out to them because she was unsure if they spoke English. She explained, “I think I was reluctant because, I mean, even if I called, we couldn’t really communicate. And so I wouldn’t.” By June, she had discovered that an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher would to translate for her. She stated that, “it worked out that we [the parents and Lindsay] didn’t even have to talk and the ESL teacher…talked to mom.” Additionally, she used students to translate for their parents at conferences, but she worried about their reliability. She was unsure if the parents got all of the information she was saying as they would mostly say ‘okay” or “yes.”

At the end of the year, Lindsay concluded that it was a socioeconomic explanation
opposed to a race explanation as to why parents were not involved in the district. Lindsay continued to reject notions of race affecting one’s experience with the school system through colorblind beliefs (Loutzenheiser, 2003). She stated that she had white, black, and Latino parents who cared and did not care. She felt it was “like low-income” parents who did not provide support to their children. When asked how she knew the socioeconomic status of these parents, she stated that the counselor had shared information about a couple of students, while other conclusions might have been “probably unjustifiable just because of like how they [students] would come in…like this one kid in particular I am think of would come in like really, really dirty and always wore the same clothes.”

Lindsay was very open in her final interview about her views on parental involvement in her district during her first year of teaching. Lindsay felt that her actual relationships with parents were “pretty accurate” reflections of her expectations, but she had overestimated the amount of parental involvement in the school. She stated that, “There were parents that knew their kids had behavior or just grade problems and did contact me more than I thought, but not significantly. I would say I was pretty much on target.” She felt that her expectations about parents were accurate because she had an accurate “preconceived idea because of the demographics…[it] isn’t - a good way to think of it, but…then like to the school, the other teachers reiterated it...and actually when I went on the interviews for the job, the whole administration was kind of like ‘sometimes we don’t have the best parental involvement.’” Other teachers “reiterated” her belief that the demographics influenced parental involvement. Other teachers and the administration had affected her perceptions of the district and parents. She heard teachers,
on multiple occasions, reference the lack of parental involvement and the demographics of the district. Without directly saying so, Lindsay was suggesting that the racial diversity of the district influenced her expectations. While Lindsay stated that teachers pretty much accepted the lack of involvement, in particular situations, they would complain. Lindsay echoed their complaints with her own thoughts about becoming frustrated when she could not reach parents.

Even though she tried to state that she had accepted it, Lindsay was clearly saddened by the lack of parental involvement. She felt disappointed that parents of failing students would not contact her back, since she thought failing was a “huge red flag” for a parent to contact the teacher. She felt that parental involvement “made a world of difference…and that it [was] sad that there [was] not as much.” She conveyed that she felt that “some kids just get swept under the rug and passed by because as much as a teacher can be an advocate for a student, there is nothing like a parent being…it’s just different.” Lindsay referenced that she came from an area where parental involvement was high. She did not elaborate, but it appeared that she was using her own experience as a marker of normalcy and therefore pitied her students (Bullough et al., 1991). Whiteness framed her perspective as she assumed that her experiences as a public school teacher were the norm (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999).

Lindsay understood, but did not openly analyze, that white parents in white districts functioned differently than parents of color in her racially diverse district. Comparing herself to a friend who taught in an upper-middle class, white/Asian district Lindsay discussed the difference in parental involvement. In her friend’s district, there was a great deal of parental involvement, concern, and care. Students were extremely
concerned with achieving high marks, not just passing. Lindsay explained that, while at moments, she was jealous, overall she preferred her own district. She explained, “I would honestly rather have, it sounds bad maybe, but this [her own district] because the thought of like parents calling and emailing like 24/7…I don’t think I could do it at that school. I mean parents breathing down your neck. I had one [parent] and they weren’t even that bad.” She continued to state that, “I just don’t know. That’s a bit much. Lindsay felt that sometimes there could be too much parental involvement (Bullough et al., 1991) and certain parents should “back off.” She referenced her friend’s experiences with parents who were “obnoxiously” involved and “breathed down her [friend’s] neck.” Lindsay thought that she would be unable to deal with that kind of pressure and involvement from every parent. She concluded that her friend was on the “other side of the spectrum” and that she actually preferred her current situation than the possibility of working in a district like her friend’s.

Lindsay had not encountered any extremely negative parental interactions, but did explain that she felt that some parents treated school contact as an item on their checklist. She felt that some parents were forced to finally come in to school and listen to the teachers/administration, but were not truly engaged in the process. At other times, she would made excuses. She stated that she knew that some parents were overwhelmed and became dismissive. Lindsay stated, “like there were just some students who I know had like ten or twelve siblings and had their own lives and this and that and whatever. And they bring the parents in but the parents are just kind of very like well he’s like messed up pretty much.” Additionally, while Lindsay spoke negatively about parental involvement, at times, she tried to soften the experience with positive interjections. She noted that she
did have parents who had consistently contacted her and there were some parents who attempted to make a change in their children’s performance. She clarified that some parents did care and that it was possible to get parents on the phone.

Lindsay was influenced by and fully accepted the protocol of the school regarding parental involvement. She did not question the validity of the school’s practices. Lindsay felt that parents had a moderate amount of power in the school. Specifically, she stated that parents had “like a reasonable amount. I don’t think they come in and throw a storm or a fit or something and things change. Like the administration I would have to say is good at if a kid did something, like this is the consequence…if a parent came in and was screaming and hollering. I think that was kind of they wanted to like show that the school sometimes gets a rep of like more urban or whatever that there is like consequences, it’s not like kids can just go and do whatever they want. So I think the parents could definitely come in, say what they want. There were situations I have heard where you know they didn’t agree with the teacher and the administration sided with the teacher.”

She explained that the administration worried about becoming an ‘urban’ district where kids were perceived as having carte blanche. The term ‘urban’ seemed fraught with race. As echoed by Lindsay, ‘urban’ (schools of color) were filled with uncontrollable students. Seemingly, ‘urban’ was being used as an identifier of race, and a possible reflection of the public school trend of black (male) students “causing” the most disciplinary problems (Ferguson, 2000). Consequently, the administration would back the teacher, unless “clearly unjust” even if the parent “came in screaming and hollering.”

Lindsay thought that district did not do much to encourage parental involvement, yet she explained that it did as much as it could. She seemed to accept and make sense of
the obstacles of parental involvement (Roehrig et al., 2002). She referenced back-to-
school night and parent-teacher conferences. She also noted that teacher webpages had to 
be updated weekly and teachers had to contact parents if a student was failing for the 
year. She noted that the district encouraged teachers to go to sporting events to build 
relationships with parents who might also have been in attendance. The school “sends out 
letters, like all the schools do. They have open house things. They have, for the freshmen, 
a BBQ for the parents and students are encouraged and welcome to come before school 
starts.” Lindsay contradicted herself throughout the end of her year. According to 
Lindsay, the district desired more parental involvement and community events; however, 
she was unsure if the administration actually did anything to encourage parental 
involvement. “They say that they want it,” but did not actually execute any plans. She 
didn’t believe that “at this point the school does anything in particular to help this issue. 
There are no events, messages sent home, etc. that would encourage parents to come/call 
anymore often.” She then recommended that the school host more events that would 
promote parents to at least come to the school.

Contrastingly, Lindsay also stated that “there is only so much you can do…not 
going to go to their house and knock on their door.” Lindsay did not know “what else the 
school could do because…sometimes the more the school pushes, the parent might be 
like annoyed.” She questioned how a parent could be “force[d]” to call or email. She 
concluded that it was a matter of the parent wanting to be involved. It seemed that 
Lindsay was conflicted between deciding who was at fault for the lack of involvement: 
the district or the parent.
Analysis of End of Year: Gaining Acceptance

By the end of the year, the socialization process in connection to whiteness had clearly affected Lindsay. Lindsay seemed to detach from her teacher preparation program, as her rare references were purely critical. Furthermore, she began to abandon her isolation, as she was becoming a part of the school’s community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Her sense of loyalty mixed with her desire to make realistic conclusions and individual choices. She demonstrated an understanding of her coworkers and referenced them far more often than ever before. She appeared to understand the frontstage and backstage discourses (Goffman, 1959) that allowed her to become part of the “ingroup.” While she maintained a level of distrust for certain veteran teachers, Lindsay was clearly trying to gain acceptance into her community.

Lindsay shied away from drawing any direct connections between race and lack of parental involvement as she continued to insist that race was not an influence in the district. She used other markers, such as socioeconomic status, as a means to explain successful parenting. She provided anecdotes of involved parents of all races and instead blamed the overall lack of involvement on socioeconomic status. Even though, she had no evidence (with the exception of a couple particular students), Lindsay clearly felt more comfortable discussing economics as the determining factor in parental involvement.

Lindsay realized that her school was different than others and stated that she had expected the low parental involvement because of the demographics of the community. And even though she complained about uninvolved parents, she stated that she preferred her district to ones where parents were too involved. As did the other teachers, Lindsay linked lack of traditional involvement to a lack of care on behalf of the parents.
Final Analysis: Conclusions on Lindsay’s First Year

Adopting Low(er)ed) Expectations

Through all of the publically available data and a year’s worth of participant self-reporting, it appeared that the district was not concerned with the involvement of its parents. Crimson Rock claimed that parents were key players in its school system, but obviously they were not. Parents had limited access to the school, as shown through simple oversights like excluding a contact directory and dates of traditional parent events from the calendar. Crimson Rock did clearly provide the legal recourses and expected obligations of parents, but it did not promote a community of involved parents. There were no invitations, suggestions, and/or outreach to parents (besides a back-to-school reminder).

The school outlined limited expectations of its teachers, including its novice teachers. In the teacher handbook, very few requirements were placed on teachers in connection to parents. Teachers were expected to send home grades and involve parents in disciplinary action. Lindsay followed those expectations and did not choose to exceed them. Grades and behavior greatly motivated Lindsay to contact parents. Throughout the year, she discussed contacting parents of failing children. By the end of the year, she was “saddened” by the parents (Bullough et al., 1991) who did not care that their child was failing. While initially she had thought that the parent would do what it took to help his/her child, Lindsay seemed to accept that that was not the case for all parents. While she maintained that all of her parental interactions were positive and that no one blamed her, she still conveyed fear of parents (McCann et al., 2005). She was always uncomfortable calling home and preferred to email when necessary. She did not contact
parents to encourage them to participate in the school and/or her classroom. She solely
called for academic or behavioral troubles. Similar to the teacher handbook, she too did
not distinguish a clear-cut reasoning for contact.

The school placed two clear expectations on the teachers in relation to parents. First, they had to send messages indicating failing students’ issues in class. Secondly, teachers had to call home about excessive absences. Lindsay did not like either one of these mandates and found that parents were unreceptive. She complained that few parents acknowledged the messages and that it wasted her time. Secondly, she did not like the policy of having to contact parents about absences since parents were annoyed at receiving these calls. Furthermore, the district expected parents to be aware of their children’s grades through traditional means of mid-marking period progress reports and report cards. Lindsay found that these were the times in the marking period when parents would reach out to her. She explained how parents would “resurface” at the end of the marking period, even though they had been “MIA” most of the time. Lindsay appeared to be annoyed, but accepting of this fact.

It was clear that Spanish-speaking parents did not hold any weight in the community. The school’s website was clearly intended for English parents, with the exception of the few translated artifacts (health and income related). Lindsay had falsely heard that the website was translatable. She knew from the beginning of the year that she would have difficulty communicating with these parents, however, it was not until the end of the year that she sought out a means to contact Spanish-speaking parents. In this way, Lindsay seemed to be resisting the system that did not supply support for her as a first-year teacher or for Spanish-speaking parents.
Socialization: Moving from Isolation to Acceptance

Lindsay spent the beginning portion of her year in isolation, but as the year progressed she began to build relationships. These relationships clearly had an effect on how she perceived the district, school, students, and parents. At the beginning of the year, it was clear that she was a new member in her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991); however, as the year progressed, her membership began to solidify as other members began to accept her. She aligned herself with two other young teachers and a veteran teacher. She slowly gained acceptance from them then others, which was evidenced by her anecdotes towards the end of the year. While she did not feel completely comfortable with her colleagues, she had built relationships and was able to reflect on advice from and conversations with them.

The broader fiscal condition of the state shaped her desire to be accepted by her community during Lindsay’s first year. Lindsay was very aware of the macropolitical scene in New Jersey during her first year of teaching. Her conscious decision to put on a happy face was driven by wanting to keep her job. She worried if she showed her true feelings that she would be replaced. Her relationships within the building seemed to (coincidental) intensify as the state cuts pended. It should not be overlooked that Lindsay’s socialization process took place under the umbrella of intense economic strife.

As she advanced in the socialization process, her allegiance to the school grew. Lindsay increasingly defended coworkers’ comments and discussed race less and less. From spring to the end of the year, Lindsay began to align herself with her coworkers and the school. While she admitted that she was unhappy teaching and, as do many new teachers, was already considering a career change (Gordon, 1991), she seemed to feel a
sense of loyalty to Crimson Rock.

Lindsay changed her view on parental involvement as she underwent the socialization process. Lindsay initially claimed that uninvolved parents were probably busy with work. Then, her explanation changed to socioeconomic factors, including single mothers and “bad home situations.” About halfway through the year, Lindsay started to report that the parents did not care and that it was the demographics. She vacillated between socioeconomics (not race), not caring, and (racial) demographics as the determinants of parental involvement. From her anecdotes, it seemed that the district promoted these reasons as the cause of the lack of parental involvement and that she adopted them into her perspective. The culture of the district started to wear on Lindsay.

Lindsay’s past experiences clearly influenced her first year of teaching (Bullough et al., 1991; Clark, 1988; Weinstein, 1989) and the corresponding expectations that she had on the role of the parent in the school system. Admittedly, Lindsay’s own school experiences fulfilled middle class white expectations of parents (deCarvalho, 2001). Her own parents were “very involved” in her schooling and held her responsible for her work. Throughout the year, she referenced how different “these kids’” experiences were. It seemed that she saw them (students of color) as lacking because their parents were not the same as her parents. By the end of the year, Lindsay viewed their lack of involvement as “not caring.” Her parents knew how to be involved in a school system, while Crimson Rock parents seemed to “not care” (Lopez, G.R., 2003)

Codes of whiteness emerged throughout Lindsay’s first-year of teaching. She did not have clear expectations of what involvement looked like (because it was a normative pattern in her life) (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999), but was able to identify and label
parents as not being involved. She blamed the parents’ socioeconomic status for the lack of involvement. While, when prompted, she admitted that the district did little to encourage parental involvement, she later retracted her statement by explaining that there was nothing else that the district could do. The school became neutral in responsibility (Lopez, G.R., 2003) as she placed blame on the parent of color. Accordingly, parental involvement and caring was the responsibility of the parent; the school and Lindsay could only do so much.

**Conclusions on Parents of Color**

At the beginning of the year, Lindsay had very little to say about parents of color and her expectations of them. She stated that there were no differences between white parents and parents of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Loutzenheiser, 2003); however, she later was able to draw clear differences between different racial groups. Initially, she had no plan when it came to dealing with parents of color. She did worry that parents of color (and students to a certain degree) would not take her seriously because her “stereotypical” white image would influence the way parents of color perceived her. She was unable to think of her treatment of them as being tainted by color, but only their treatment of her. She saw herself as race neutral (Loutzenheiser, 2003). Since she was placed in an unfamiliar racial environment (Sullivan, 2006) she anticipated feeling more comfortable on email and phone than in-person when it came to interacting with parents of color. She felt that she could build their trust before they met her. Lindsay began the year only sharing what she had heard about Latino parents who were reputed to handover the responsibility of education to teachers. At this point in the year, Lindsay was unwilling to or did not have any other expectations specific to the race of a parent. She
was more comfortable discussing socioeconomic status as an influencing factor in the performance of students opposed to parental involvement based on race.

However, as the year continued and Lindsay began to acclimate to her surroundings, she became more aware and/or more open about sharing her observations and views on parents of color. Across the middle portion of her year, she reported her experiences with parents of color and conclusions that she drew about them. Several times throughout the year, Lindsay stated that she did not have much interaction with white parents and that she rarely (if ever) received emails from them. However, she still drew some rather positive conclusions about the white parents without much evidential support. Seemingly, Lindsay used her own experiences as a child of white parents and growing up in a white community to found her conclusions of white parents in Crimson Rock. Her past experiences with parental involvement influenced her expectations and conclusions (Bullough et al., 1991; Clark, 1988). She used a single anecdote of a white mother who was persistent in making sure that her son improved his grade. She saw this white mother as knowing how to navigate the school system to the best of the child’s benefit (deCarvalho, 2001). It appeared that Lindsay justified her beliefs about white parents through this anecdote.

Additionally, she based some of her conclusions on the behavior of students in her class. She seemed (as is epidemic in the public school system) to have the most disciplinary challenges with black male students (Ferguson, 2000). It was unclear how their behavior differed from the white students whom she stated would only chat and not do homework. Yet, she was able to conclude that when white parents got involved that the students’ behavior and grades would improve. White parents seemed to be able to
make that change in the child. Lindsay stated that she had not called home for any white
student, so it was unclear how she knew that white parents were so effective. It appeared
that knowledge about white normative practices (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999) (i.e.,
reinforcing positive school behavior) influenced her constructions of white parents in her
district. She used her (and society’s) existing constructions of white parents to conclude
that all white parents would effectuate change in their children’s behavior. Without any
evidence, she was able to draw a strong, positive conclusion on white parenting.
Furthermore, Lindsay felt that white parents did not give total authority to the teacher, but
rather wanted to grant permission to the teacher. She concluded that white parents were
effectively involved in their children’s lives as they caused change and encouraged their
children in the “right” way.

When discussing parents of color, Lindsay most often discussed black parents,
however, she drew a couple conclusions of Latino parents. She explained that Latino
parents put the “fear of God” in their child and he/she had no choice but to improve in
school. She felt that Latino children feared and respected their parents even though she
did not provide any specific examples or proof to support this claim.

In the beginning of the year and in early winter, she explained that black parents
were supportive of her as the teacher, direct, and willing to let her have total authority.
While, she felt that black parents were supportive of her, she did not feel that they
produced the desired change in the child. She felt that black parents tried, but the results
were the same. Black parents contributed to their children’s self-fulfilling prophecy by
not encouraging and raising their children in the right way (Tutwiler, 2005). She clearly
concluded that white parents were better at encouraging their children to succeed and
producing change. Lindsay held firm to her beliefs founded in whiteness that successful parents acted “white.”

While she admitted that the majority of her interactions were with parents of color, at several points, she claimed that they were not involved. As the year progressed, her views of parental involvement became increasingly more negative. She complained that only two parents of color had stayed in regular contact with her (yet she did not provide any data on white parents). Later in the year, she stated that in regards to the school system, parents of color were just not that involved. It seemed that there was an incongruity in her story.

**Whiteness as Shaping Acceptance**

Codes of whiteness emerged throughout Lindsay’s first year of teaching. She brought the typical expectations of parents with her to the job. Based on her own experiences in school and with her own parents, Lindsay had a preconceived idea of how parents should participate in school. However, she was unable to clearly articulate what those expectations were. She could not recognize that whiteness and its cultural scripts framed the experiences of parents (and students in her school) (Lee & Sims, 2008a). It seemed that Lindsay was unclear how she was expected to involve parents and thus relied on her traditional views of parental involvement framed by whiteness. At the beginning of the year, she had goals of having consistent communication with all parents about positive and negative experiences with their children. She expected traditional means of parental involvement (i.e., calling, emailing, checking homework, and attending back-to-school night and parent conferences). Beyond that, Lindsay could not identify what “good” parental involvement entailed. Her expectations were bounded to the white norm
of parents.

As she became more accepted by her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Lindsay began to face what it considered the district’s reality (i.e., uninvolved parents of color). Further along in the year, she concluded that parents were to blame for the lack of involvement, even though she could not identify any way in which the school encouraged them to be involved. The blame was placed on the parents rather than teachers or the school. While Lindsay came into the district expecting to have positive relationships with all parents, by the end of the year, she had adopted an “it is what it is” mentality. At the end of the year, Lindsay expressed that she had always expected low involvement because of the demographics of the district, however, that is not what she had reported in her beginning of the year responses. Lindsay had been optimistic about the types and amount of parental involvement that she would experience that year.

As the year progressed, she experienced and heard the complaints of other teachers about the “demographics of the town.” And, while at first, Lindsay entirely rejected the “demographics” as an underlying racial commentary, by the end of the year, she admitted that some of these comments were probably based on race. She became complacent when it came to parental involvement and while she admitted that the district did not do much to encourage parents, she also insisted that the district had done all it could. She placed blame on the parents for not being involved as she attributed it to a lack of care.

Supporting the Hegemonic Structure

Complicating Lindsay’s constructions of parents of color is her inability to recognize the larger hegemonic structures that obscure power in society. Lindsay did not
realize that she was part of a racialized system, and consequently, had no tools to resist the dominant racial ideologies of the school system. Since race is socially constructed (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), consequently it is socially reproduced. Without being consciously aware of it, Lindsay became a perpetuator of the reproduction of racist frames of reference (Figueroa, 1991). She failed to see that through its institutional structure, the school perpetuates racism in education (Jenson, 2005) and consequently racism in society (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Lindsay was completely unaware that she was working to support a system that made her believe that school was a level-playing field while truly reproducing social inequity (Jay, 2003). When asked to consider any racism that she witnessed in the school, she explained that she had not encountered any racist comments or acts by her coworkers. She did not consider any form of racism at the operational, systemic level. Simply, she was looking for gross displays of whiteness opposed to the invisible whiteness that supports the white privilege and the displacement of other races (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Institutional power and operational norms enable racism to oppress people of color (Hyland, 2005). Unspoken assumptions often fuel race and its corresponding privileges (Figueroa, 1991). Therefore, Lindsay’s ignorance of white privilege then reinforced the system of white privilege (Sullivan, 2006).

Lindsay clearly did not know that a system of racial oppression existed in her school. She was unwilling and/or unable to acknowledge personal, systemic, or structural racism. However, because she desired legitimation (Olesen & Wittaker, 1968) and strived to become a member of her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), she aligned herself with the dominant group. It is through “alignment” that people create
based on joint action (Sullivan, 2006), which consequently results in granting or denying privilege. Lindsay did not recognize that her colleagues (as with other players in her life) were transmitting messages about race, which developed her unconscious life (Sullivan, 2006). Therefore, her acceptance of the dominant discourse surrounding parents of color further reinforced patterns of whiteness (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999) at the systemic level.

**Summary**

In this chapter, Lindsay’s first year of teaching was explored in connection with the expectations of the district, school, coworkers, and Lindsay, herself. The first section of the chapter clearly detailed the school’s expectations of novice teachers and parents in relation with race, economics, and language. The multiple sources of data from Crimson Rock were triangulated to create an image of the district’s goals, treatment, and expectations. I concluded that Crimson Rock desired to appear accepting of its diversity, but in fact did not back up those claims with any substantive evidence. Parents, as a whole, were not wholly invited into the functioning of the school outside of legal measurements. Race, language, and economics were not taken into consideration even though Crimson Rock acknowledged its racial and economic diversity. As the data reflected, Crimson Rock had unclear expectations of teachers outside of standard protocol on the functioning of the building. Very importantly, the first section of this chapter served as a foundation to which Lindsay’s self-reported data was contextualized.

I broke down the reporting and analysis of Lindsay’s first year of teaching into three time periods: beginning, middle, and end of her first year. In doing so, I provided a picture of her development while remaining committed to the thematic codes that
emerged. Throughout the three sections, I paid close attention to how the socialization process affected her constructions of parents of color. In each section, I discussed her identity in connection with her interactions with parents (both white and of color). I framed my analysis in relation to how codes of whiteness affected (and did not affect) her identity and constructions of parents of color.

As reported in this chapter, Lindsay’s professional identity developed as she became emerged in her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Her transition from isolation to a sense of belonging in the school clearly (and negatively) influenced her ability to resist the dominant assumptions about parents of color. As the year advanced, Lindsay drew stronger conclusions about parents, parents of color, and parental involvement. Especially in the middle section of the year, when Lindsay was neither in isolation nor a part of her school, Lindsay began to voice strong conclusions on race in connection to herself as a white teacher. She recognized that race might have been an underlying issue in her coworkers’ thoughts, but alleged that it did not matter to her. She echoed the concerns, thoughts, and opinions of her colleagues in the later months of the academic school year. At the end of the year, Lindsay seemed to have accepted a defeatist mentality that parental involvement in Crimson Rock “is what it is.” She defended her school and the teachers, demonstrating a sense of allegiance. While Lindsay still drew some contrasting opinions to her coworkers, it appeared that she had gained a similar mindset on parents of color as she gained acceptance into the community.
Chapter VI

Natalie’s First Year

In this chapter, I analyze Natalie’s first year of teaching within the context of her environment, paying close attention to how whiteness did (and did not) affect her experiences. I triangulate (Yin, 1994) multiple sources of data to thicken my analysis of her first year of teaching. First, I construct an image of Mapleton School District as a foundation for Natalie’s experiences. In the following three sections, I pay close attention to the chronological development of Natalie’s experiences with parents of color. I divide the middle three sections of this chapter by her beginning, middle, and end of the year experiences. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I analyze Natalie’s entire year first year of teaching and her constructions of parents of color.

Image of the District

Multiple sources of data were used to construct an image of Mapleton School District. I collected, coded, and analyzed the district handbook, student code of conduct, website, and strategic action plans. Through the analysis of these data sources, I hoped to present an image of the ways that the district expected new teachers and parents (of color) to function. While the sources were rich in data, for the purpose of this study, I considered the research questions as the guide for my coding and analysis.

Four major sources of publically available data helped create the image of the district. The district handbook and student code of conduct both exposed the intended image in a formal format. The district handbook was approximately 500 pages in length, divided into 6 major sections, and subdivided into 125 subsections. Its major sections focused on community, administration, operations, personnel, students, and instruction.
Within those sections, policies, roles, and obligations were explained using the legal NJSA references as support. The student code of conduct was approximately 50 pages and focused on the expectations of student behavior in the school. While the student code of conduct’s sole focus was students, I considered it a rich source of data as it had a direct influence on the expectations of teachers and parents. Mapleton also provided Strategic Action Plans, or its formalized goals for the next five years. From the data, it appeared that Mapleton viewed a strategic action plan as a focused, goal-oriented program that used evidence and responsible parties to accomplish specific tasks to reach benchmark goals. This document was coded and analyzed looking at the areas of improvement that Mapleton felt were important enough to be included (and/or excluded). Finally, the district website, less formal than the other sources of data, provided the ongoing expectations as it framed the relationship between parents and the school, as well as teachers and the school.

The coding of these data sources produced dozens of categories, subcategories, and codes; however, for the purpose of this project, I present five areas of importance: parents, novice teachers, race, language, and economics. The first three areas closely reflect the research questions; however, language and economics reflect the underlying expectations of parents. Since white middle class language is the marker by which people are judged in America (Kendall, 2006) and economics are often associated with race (Lee, 2005), I found particular importance in how these groups were accepted or marginalized from the school in connection to the code of race.

**Mapleton’s View of Parental Involvement**

While Mapleton offered some expectations and invitations to participate in the
school system, it mostly concerned itself with following federal and state laws regarding parents’ legal entitlements in the school. Parents were entitled to be informed and to make decisions about the physical and academic well-being of their children in the school system. Specifically, parents were to be informed of disciplinary actions, upcoming events at the school, failing grades, possible non-graduation, and any injuries that occurred at school. While grades were emphasized as a significant interest of parents, discipline was much more important. Parents were expected to be involved in many of the disciplinary actions in the school. While at moments the handbook emphasized the importance of school-parent relations and communication as pivotal in shaping the school’s identity, overwhelmingly, the handbook focused on the bureaucratic nature of their relationship.

Parents had the opportunity to participate in the school outside of the legal requirements. The district encouraged parents to be involved in homework, participate in surveys, and family life curriculum (i.e., sex education). The district wanted the home to be an extension of the school. In this way, the district expected that the home align itself with the school, not the other way around. Thus, the district expected the values, principles, and expectations of the school to be reflected and supported by the family unit. While the district wanted parental involvement to correspond with the demographics of the school, no specific plan was outlined. The district, then, acknowledged that participation from all parents was a philosophical priority, but not necessarily an executed reality.

The district presented its philosophical representation of parents in the school system. It stated that it valued parental participation, communication, and contributions;
however, no specific expectations were provided. The district’s philosophical approach to parental involvement appeared opening, welcoming, and progressive; however, after careful analysis, it was obvious that the district did not provide the means for parents to fulfill that image. In the strategic action plan, none of the fifteen goals included promotion of parental involvement or relationships with home. Thus, while parents were mentioned as important participants in the educational process, they did not fit into the actual plan for the district. The district attempted to clearly project parents as partners in the educational process, yet the handbooks and strategic action plan created the reality of parents as participants only in legal matters.

Parents were to behave as role models and reflect the shared ethics of the community. There was an assumption that there was one single definition of a role model or that all parents shared similar ethics. Mapleton’s philosophy appeared to be an “educentric” view based on the assumption that its perspective would have naturally corresponded with the home (Dunlap & Alva, 1999). Furthermore, in the student code of conduct, the district created a list of fifteen parental responsibilities. Parents were expected to teach their children honesty and respect for school, others, and the law. Also, parents were expected to motivate, encourage, and foster respect in their children. The district failed to explain how parents foster, encourage, or promote certain undefined terms like respect and a positive attitude. Parents were to attend conferences and reach out to the school. They were expected to provide a fit home and to help students with their studies everyday. The district’s outline of the fifteen responsibilities of parents revealed an underlying assumption that all parents accepted the same code of conduct as appropriate according to societal (white) norms (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). The
use of ‘must’ made it seem as if a parent did not behave in certain way that he/she has
failed as a parent. The district left little room for personal or cultural choice in how to
raise one’s kids. The parents with the (white) cultural capital that was aligned with the
school would have been able to fulfill the expectations of and navigate the school while
other parents would not have (deCarvalho, 2001). The operating assumption was that the
district operated under the influence of white privilege. Consequently, role modeling and
ethics would have been white definitions of normative practices in society. The district
failed to explicitly detail the behaviors and expectations of a role model or an ethical
parent. These expectations might have furthered the inequitable treatment and opinions of
parents of color since certain parents (i.e., white parents) would have understood these
expectations, while parents of color might not have understood the normative white
practices.

The district website (and individual school pages) functioned as a more informal
communication between the school and home. Clearly, the webpage was designed for
parental use. There was a great deal of information and resources available to parents
online, such as enrichment websites, addresses of local health clinics, adult classes, and
for-cost childcare. The district and individual school websites encouraged parents to
involve their children in extracurricular activities and to be aware of upcoming
events/obligations. Parents were able to access all school notices/letters from an online
document folder. Additionally, parents were encouraged to contact school staff through a
provided directory. Parents were granted access to the online gradebook. The website
really served as a direct line of communication with the parent.
Teacher Role in Mapleton

The data did not reveal much information on teacher conduct, decisions, or role in the educational process. However, there was specific information on novice teachers and teacher development that helped reveal the district’s philosophy on teachers. Teachers were labeled leaders who were expected to continue growing as professionals. There were no resources, courses, or avenues identified to achieve this growth. The district handbook gave specific attention to novice teachers’ employment, development, and retention in the school district. The district understood that novice teachers needed to be supported (Ingersoll, 2001) and realized the potential positive influence that a good mentor could have on a novice teacher. The district clearly outlined a mentoring program, under the guide of a professional development committee that was evaluated by the state. The mentoring program’s purpose was to not only to improve student achievement, but also to help novice teachers acclimate to the challenges of being a teacher. Additionally, one of the district’s goals was to create an energizing environment with high morale for teachers to strive for educational innovation. In order to achieve this goal, the district intended to review and revise the mentoring plan to increase the retention of novice teachers.

It appeared that teachers were the midway step of the code of conduct. Most of the interaction appeared to exist between the student and the administrator. The teacher served as the conveyer of information. In reference to parents, teachers were expected to communicate with parents about students’ misbehavior in a timely manner; however, it was unclear what timely meant. Race was also mentioned in connection to teachers. Teachers were expected to avoid racial comments, indicating that there was an awareness
of racist behavior by employees in the district. Additionally, the strategic action plan emphasized a need to increase multicultural awareness in its employees and to recruit a more diverse staff. The district was concerned with its staff members reflecting the racial diversity of the district.

**Mapleton’s Racial Diversity**

The district handbook openly addressed issues of diversity and equity in its district. It included goals to create a more equitable environment, based on both its educational philosophy and state legal statutes that protect individuals from inequitable practices. The district was clearly cognizant that racial disparity and inequity were very possible outcomes in a district with such racial and socioeconomic diversity. The closing of the achievement gap (assumed to be the racial achievement gap) (specifically by the 3% district yearly progress marker) was also mentioned as a district goal in the handbook, strategic action plan, and on the website by the Board of Education president. It appeared that as the district was becoming more racially diverse that it faced emerging issues (Lopez, G.R., 2003). Additionally, the minority student representation (assumed to mean non-white) at each district school was to reflect the overall population. Thus, the school district was not to pool all of its students of color at one school. It was mentioned that the schools were redistricted to increase equity and access to higher-level education. The district wanted to have equitable schools with all students having access to the same education. The district very openly stated that its goal was to reduce any gender or racial overrepresentation in disciplinary action, drop out rates, and special education.

Throughout the handbook, a nondiscriminatory clause (based on race, gender, sexual identity, etc) was used. The clause applied to all cases where potential employees,
current employees, students, and/or parents could take legal action against the district. The district required that both teachers and students avoid using biased comments that would offend others based on race, sex, or religion. Additionally, according to the handbook, the curriculum was to be designed to promote respect and understanding between groups and eliminate discrimination based on all religions, races, sexes, gender identification, disabilities, nationalities, ancestry, and sexual orientation. It was unclear how/if that policy was implemented or if it was simply a blanket legal statement.

**Non-English Speakers in Mapleton**

The handbook revealed that non-English speaking students and families did not hold positions of power in the district. Very few services were available to non-English speaking students/parents. At parent conferences, translation was to be made available, when possible, for parents who did not speak English as their primary language. And, the school would have to make provisions for informing non-English speaking parents of the discipline policies at the school. While it seemed that translations would have been made available, translation of certain documents depended on the reader’s request to have that document translated. And, in certain cases, it seemed that the parent would had to have to read enough English to know that he/she had the right to ask for translation services.

Translation and issues of language appeared in only a few isolated instances on the webpage. The district webpage offered the free/reduced lunch information and application packet in Spanish. The district was legally obligated to share free/reduced lunch information in Spanish and used a state-created document. An oversight in translating all three links into Spanish revealed that attention was not paid to Spanish-speaking parents. The school did give some importance to students (and adults) learning
to speak English through its references to the available ESL services in the school and community. Parents and children were encouraged to assimilate into the language dominance of English. The researcher concluded that non-English speakers were not viewed as full stakeholders in the community.

**Economic Impact in Mapleton**

The district handbook stated that it desired to offer the most educational opportunities at the lowest cost. In regards to economics, the district was very concerned with its budget. The community profile emphasized its own fiscal accountability and consciousness in regards to financially providing for the school and students. The district webpage provided extensive information and links concerning the school budget. Everything from an online budget video to how to vote was included in the links. The district’s fiscal situation mattered greatly, however, individual fiscal situations did not matter as much. The school offered minimal services to students from low-income families, including the free/reduced lunch/milk program and a latchkey program based on income. On the website, the district made parents aware of FamilyCare (health insurance for the economically disadvantaged) and a preschool that waived its fees for those who could not afford it. While the district acknowledged that economic disparity might have existed in its community, it did not attempt to develop or offer anything beyond the state/federally-required services.

**Analysis of Mapleton’s Image**

Mapleton’s publically available sources revealed an image of a district that legally constructed the roles of parents, teachers, and students. The district was concerned with the legal rights of its population, and followed federal/state regulations as closely as
possible. The website primarily focused on conveying important information to parents regarding events, resources, and obligations. Parents were able to access district information, events, dates, extracurricular information, some forms, and recommended resources. The district used its website as its primary mode of communication with parents; however, it was somewhat difficult to navigate and lacked organization. The district also assumed that all parents had access to a computer and to the internet. The student code of conduct revealed the expectations that the school had of parents concerning the disciplinary functioning of its schools, as well as its legal obligations to parents. Parents mattered to the school, but were clearly expected to follow the vision of good parenting according to assumed values (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999) that the district had established. Little room was left for parents who did not fulfill the goals outlined in the code of conduct. Parents were expected to understand not only what the district meant but also how to fulfill those goals.

According to the data, teachers were expected to develop professionally, however, the district did not mention specific areas or means of improvement. Novice teachers were offered mentors who were chosen based on criteria; however, the nature of those criteria was vague. The district was concerned with recruiting and keeping teachers who reflected the diversity of the district. Furthermore, the district viewed parents and teachers as sharing responsibility for the development and execution of its plan. However, while the district emphasized that the home-school relationship was pivotal, it did not really incorporate or outline any goals to enhance that relationship.

Mapleton’s vision statement concerning the role of parental involvement and diversity at the school revealed a recognition that these issues mattered; however, there
were no clearly defined policies for either issue. The district was aware of race and racism in its schools, from both teachers and students. It outlined a zero-tolerance policy against racism from students and aimed to become more racially equitable (in its staff hirings and minority academic achievement levels).

The district provided some information for economically disadvantaged parents/families and non-English speakers; however, those groups were not viewed as significant stakeholders. Lower socioeconomic members and non-English speaking members of the school community wielded little power and were not provided services to make their experiences more equitable within the school system. Non-English speakers and disadvantaged students/families did not appear to matter to the district.

Overall, the publically available sources of data revealed an image of Mapleton School District. Mapleton’s views on parents, teachers, race, socioeconomics, and language were coded and analyzed, paying close attention to the research questions of this study. The conclusions on Mapleton served as the foundation of Natalie’s first year of teaching. These documents revealed the shell of Mapleton’s projected image. In the following section, Natalie’s experiences within that shell will be analyzed.

**Natalie’s Entrance into Mapleton**

Natalie began her first year of teaching with a great openness about her teaching experiences and her feelings towards Mapleton. She was very direct about her thoughts and reflections about her own teaching choices and the district’s decisions. Natalie’s lengthy interview and journal responses revealed what she believed about teaching, parents, school as an institution, and culture. While not all of the information she provided was solicited, some of the information proved to be useful and other
information did not fit within the realm of this study.

Natalie’s Past Experiences with Parents

Natalie’s past experiences with school certainly affected her first year of teaching (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). It was clear that Natalie did not feel that her teacher preparation program positively influenced her in the areas of parental involvement and cultural awareness. She explained that the program was mostly comprised of content courses. As part of the language education program, she was required to take many courses in phonology, linguistics, and language acquisition. She also recalled a couple of methodology courses that focused on lesson plan writing. However, Natalie did not have a clear memory of what she learned in her teacher preparation program concerning parents. Additionally, the teacher preparation program did not prepare her for the unique role that she felt the ESL teacher had to assume. She felt that it should have prepared her to be the middleman between the non-English speaking student/parent and the school.

She felt that most of her learning about parental involvement came from her cooperating teachers. “I’m pretty sure I went over it [parental involvement] with the field supervisor and we talked a little bit about what to do at conferences and how to kind of present yourself. But most of the education that I got on with how to deal with parents and stuff was through the collaborating teachers I had.” Her first placement was with a high school French teacher and her second cooperating teacher was a middle school ESL teacher. She most often referred to her cooperating teacher as the ESL teacher. She explained that her cooperating teachers talked about how to run conferences and back-to-school night. She watched how her first cooperating teacher ran back-to-school night and used that experience to decide how she would like to run her own back-to-school night in
the future. She stated, “I got to see how my first collaborating teacher ran back-to-school night. And I formed my own opinions on whether or not I thought that was the way that I would do it or not.” At her second placement, she was allowed to run her own one-on-one conferences with parents. First, Natalie watched her collaborating teacher run a conference, and then she was allowed to facilitate her own. She remembered being “a little nervous. But it was a really good feeling afterwards.” She stated that she and her cooperating teacher “had that level of trust in our relationship at that point where she knew that I could read the data. She knew that I could talk to the parents. And she was sitting right there.” Natalie clearly felt a “level of trust” with her cooperating teacher. She pointed out that running conferences in the ESL placement was easier than it would have been in the French placement because “ESL parents don’t necessarily know the language” and “it made [her] feel confident enough that they weren’t looking at [her] as not certified.” She felt that ESL parents were more accepting than English-speaking parents would have been conferencing with an uncertified student teacher.

Natalie’s Past with Race and Diversity

It appeared that Natalie arrived at her teacher preparation program with an awareness of her white identity and a recognition of cultural acceptance. As with most teacher preparation programs, she was only exposed to one cultural relevancy course (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). She recalled a single language and culture course and described it as “awesome.” She reflected on a cultural self-evaluation in that course that helped her realize that even though she was a “white female whose family had been in America for generations that [she did] have some kind of culture.” She stated that, “it brought a lot to light” about her own cultural biases. Natalie, however, took issue with the
professor who at one point in the semester “came off like everyone that was from Irish or Italian or anywhere in Europe or European background or whose family had been here were all European Americans and that everyone else was either Latino, black, or whatever.” It appeared that Natalie was pointing out that her professor felt that the white identity was constructed out of identifying itself as not black (McKinney, 2005). Natalie then concluded that even though the course’s “goal was to try to get people to recognize that people are different things outside of boxes, she still kept us in our boxes and it was hard.” Natalie seemingly faced conflict with her professor because she felt that the professor believed the white race to lack cultural formation (McDermott & Samson, 2005).

During her student teaching, Natalie realized that her students’ experiences were very different than hers growing up. She stated that her ESL students “in no way have the same experiences as I did growing up.” She recognized that the white cultural practices were the norm (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999); however, she acknowledged that her experiences were not everyone else’s. She carried on to provide an example of how her whiteness conflicted with their understanding of normal. In class, Natalie had referenced putting trash on the curb for garbage collection. Her cooperating teacher later explained to her that most of the students lived in apartment complexes and knew nothing about curbside pickup. Natalie concluded that, “you have to kind of know your audience.”

**Natalie’s Initial Expectations of Parental Involvement**

Natalie did not seem to have firm expectations of parents. She did not explicitly state what parents should or should not do. She explained that her “goal [was] to have my parents know that their kids are in ESL and that they are being helped. I would like to see
parents become more active with the students. And I do, some of the parents will ask ‘what can I do?’ So when I see a parent I say ‘These are some ways you can help them at home’…they can encourage the child to read.” She stated that she “ultimately want[ed] them to be able to encourage the kids to communicate.” She knew that ESL parents would be difficult to get in contact with, however, she seemed willing to accept that there would be “some parents” that she was not “going to be able to talk to.” She did not judge these parent as being uninvolved or uncaring as many teachers would (Lopez, G.R., 2003). She stated that she “liked the idea of emailing the parents once a week” and also letting them “hear positive things about their students.”

Natalie attempted to be conscientious of parent’s time availability and language limitations. She offered parents choice in their conference time (within the school’s allotted conference hours) and maintained a website where she offered phone conferences or other times for in-person conferences. She stated that it was best to use different methods to contact parents.

Overall, she felt that she had already fallen behind on her goals. She stated that she “spent so much time trying to get kids in order and my ducks in a row and [her] programs running” that she wished that she had sent a letter out to parents. She wanted to encourage parents to attend back-to-school night. She stated that she already had a plan to “make more of a priority of emailing [her] parents” and “in my second year, third year and fourth year, I’ll get better at doing this [contacting parents].”

Natalie’s Accordance with District Expectations

In regards to the school, she was expected to regularly update grades in the online gradebook for parents to access, to attend conferences, and align her ideas about
interacting with parents with the district. Additionally, she was instructed to reply to parent emails/phone calls within 24 hours even if it meant simply telling the parent she would reply soon. She was instructed to be direct in dealing with parents and address their specific concern. She used the phrase “putting yourself in the parent’s shoes.”

According to Natalie, new teachers were told, “do not use jargon or slang when [they] are talking, to talk as an educated, professional person. Pretty much that was pretty much what came across.” They were directed not to use teacher “jargon” but to speak clearly as “an educated, professional person.” It appeared that the district expected its employees to practice the acceptable discourse in America, according to white normative communication practices (Kendall, 2006). The school told the new teachers to be a reliable source of information because the majority of information that a parent will receive in the district will come from teachers. Clearly, the district wanted parents to feel understood and resolved.

According to Natalie, the school offered access and support to parents. Parents were given access to online teacher webpages, an online folder for school documents, and the online gradebook. The district webpage claimed to be translatable but that function did not actually work. Conferences had shifted from the traditional parent-teacher format to student-led conferences with teams of teachers. Teacher teams had common planning periods and were expected to meet with parents during this time if needed. She also viewed the monthly breakfast with the superintendent as parental support. And, parents could attend community offered adult classes in English language and grandparents could attend a support group.
Natalie’s Awareness of the Importance of Race

Natalie arrived at her first year of teaching with openness about the importance of her own race in connection with her students and parents. She was aware of ideas based on white privilege. Natalie recognized that her school was extremely “culturally diverse.” “As you walk into that school, you know that you are in an environment that is very culturally diverse, you can’t not. All you have to do is spend five minutes in the school.” Furthermore, she referenced the community survey that took place before her arrival in the district. Two-thirds of the survey participants stated that the school needed to address the social and cultural diversity of the district. Natalie felt that community knew it was diverse and that the school was not doing a good enough job addressing concerns.

She was aware of her own identity as a white female and tried to be open about her own race with her students. She attempted to create an atmosphere where the students could ask any question without fearing that she would have a negative reaction. Natalie did not attempt to utilize colorblind or race neutral techniques (Loutzenheiser, 2003), but rather chose to recognize her own race and that of her students/parents. Natalie seemed to recognize that most often a white person could freely occupy any space (Sullivan, 2006). She explained that being an ESL teacher allowed her to feel what other cultures must in a primarily white environment. Natalie provided an example of when her class laughed at her for asking them about their breakfast habits. She explained, “there have been times - there have been two or three times when I’ll ask them a question and they’ll say to me and I’ll ask them a question and they will laugh at me because I don’t know it. And so I get the feeling back of like what they must feel like when people don’t understand their culture. Like one of my kids we were talking about breakfast. And he said, ‘Well I had
rice for breakfast.’ And I said ‘Oh, do you eat it hot or cold?’, because I didn’t know. And they all laughed at me. In America we eat cereal for breakfast.” The kids laughed at the silliness of her question until she explained “American” eating habits. It did appear that Natalie was echoing the common practice of synonymously using “American” to represent whiteness (Jay, 2003). As a result of that conversation, Natalie explained, “so we decided, everybody would pick a topic. Everybody picked a topic and everybody did a presentation earlier this week on their topic that they picked to share from their culture. And then the next day, they brought in food from their culture.” Essentially, Natalie felt that she infused and respected other cultures by developing lessons on immigration and holiday customs, which Furumoto (2008) would argue were just markers of colorblind practices. However, it appeared that Natalie did not fully commit to colorblind techniques, but attempted to recognize her own white identity in context of her students.

She stated that she had mostly Latino and Asian students. She did not discuss their backgrounds too much, however, she did state that she sometimes questioned if specific behaviors were culturally motivated. For example, she explained that she was confused about the behavior of a male Dominican student. She specifically stated, “is what he doing a cultural -- Is he doing it because it’s a cultural thing or is he doing it because he doesn’t understand or is he doing it because he’s being defiant? Clearly, she was unsure if it was “a cultural thing” or if he was being defiant. Natalie continuously questioned her way of interpreting behavior.

**Early Interaction with and Constructions of Parents of Color**

Natalie described the composition of her classroom. She had a great deal of Asian and Latino students, no white students or traditional African-American students. She did
have black students from the Caribbean. Natalie was very exact when mentioning parents of color, specific in numbers and nationality and/or race at back-to-school night. She explained that the high number of Asians probably reflected the student population and was not a reflection of the parental interest. The accuracy of that conclusion was difficult to assess because she did not provide a percentage breakdown or account for student-to-parent nationality attendance. Natalie believed that most of the parents of her students were interested in their children because they either came to back-to-school night or held a phone conference. She related care and concern with interest in grades. She stated that “my parents do seem to be concerned with the students getting high grades in their subjects.” She concluded that their fulfillment of traditional definitions of parental involvement expressed care and concern for their children’s development.

Natalie did not specifically draw conclusions on parents of color in her initial responses. She explained that she felt respected by parents of color. The parents had “a lot of respect for teachers. So if you say you are a teacher…it’s very respected.” Even though some of the parents struggled to communicate with her in English, they would often thank her for teaching their children. She believed that as an ESL teacher that she received more appreciation than mainstream teachers. She stated that parents would thank her and say things that “you don’t always hear back as a teacher that are really good to hear.”

Natalie was aware of the students’ home culture. While she encouraged students to embrace English, she worried about them losing their home culture. It was a fine balance and she did not want to tell a student that his/her home language was wrong because of the implications. She understood that parents might try to preserve their
children’s sense of culture by purposefully not speaking English at home. Natalie explained that she did not know how much English was being spoken at home and that often there was no real reason why “parents should take themselves of that comfort zone” of speaking their native language. Furthermore, she understood that the family situation might be different than the typical family. She stated that, “sometimes you’re talking to grandfather or you’re talking to their uncle and that’s - culturally that’s appropriate.”

Another code that emerged in Natalie’s first journal set was the issue of teacher authority. She stated that some parents (undisclosed who) had preconceptions that the teacher had ultimate authority and that parents should not be involved. She stated that personally, she had not fully experienced that. Her students’ parents rarely questioned her methods. She felt that, traditionally, English-speaking parents would question a teacher’s authority and teaching methods. She drew the conclusion that it was an English versus non-English issue, not a race issue. It seemed that she had a preconceived notion of how parents typically interacted with teachers, and that her students’ parents did not fulfill that image.

Natalie reflected on the lack of parental involvement at the school, opposed to in her individual classroom. She stated that most non-English speaking parents did not attend events at the school. It appeared that non-English speaking parents were not an important part of the school community and did not feel comfortable attending school events.

She stated that sometimes it was difficult to be in contact with parents because of the language barrier. She noted appreciation for her classroom aide who made some phone calls for her. Natalie explained that she used kids as translators. She would tell
them “this is what you have to tell mom or dad and make sure they understand it.” She stated that she would “ask kids to bring their parents to school” and sometimes translate for them. Also, she would use the online database to check for an email contact, or would ask the kids for an email address of “someone who is going to tell your parents what is going on at school.” In this way, Natalie was choosing to introduce another person into the parent-teacher relationship.

Natalie assumed the role of middleman between the school and the home. She stated, “I feel like it is my responsibility to make sure that they know when they are taking a paper home and the schools says, ‘Here, drop this paper into your backpack and take it home.’ I feel like it’s my responsibility that my kids know what the paper says, especially with really time-sensitive stuff.” Furthermore, she was very aware of the translation services made available to parents. While she believed there to be a translation option on the school website, she had not used it, yet. She stated that she still needed to “make those connections” for the kids and parents to use the online resources. Since Natalie believed that the school had not sent parents the access information for the online gradebook, she was in the process of preparing translated letters for her supervisor to approved.

**Socialization, Isolation, and Novice Influences**

She attended a new teacher orientation in the summer and was scheduled to attend several new teacher meetings throughout the year. The first new teacher meeting focused mostly on special education and communication. It did provide some information regarding parental contact. Natalie seemed to base some of her interactions with parents on the information that she received at that orientation.
Natalie discussed her supervisor (who was also the vice principal) and his limited understanding of ESL. She stated that she kept in close contact with him and would run ideas by him. Since she was the only middle school ESL teacher, her supervisor also oversaw the elementary ESL teachers. While she stated that he was overall a knowledgeable man, he did not have specific information as to how to run an ESL program. When asked about her mentor teacher, Natalie explained that she had requested that she have an ESL teacher and not a foreign language teacher as she had anticipated that the district would try to assign to her. She felt confident that she could navigate the policies and grading. She stated, “I can walk around the middle school and find what I need to know about grading and doing all of that stuff.” She was “more concerned with the ESL end of things.” She recognized that there were aspects of the program and policies regarding testing/placement that she did not know. She stated that her mentor was the person to whom she anticipated going to with questions in those areas.

In terms of being an ESL teacher, she felt isolated (Anhorn, 2008) as it was “very, very hard. And that a lot of other teachers don’t understand the specific challenges.” Natalie explained that she felt very much on her own. She was “trying really hard to get to know people.” Since she was split between two schools, she had two different staffs to which she would have to adjust. She explained that the schools had very different sets of administrators, guidance, and teachers. She stated that the afternoon school was “much more friendly than the staff at the morning school.” She believed that her “personality click[ed] better with them.” Additionally, since she spent less time at the morning school, she stated that she “felt like the new kid on the playground that nobody wanted to play with.” She directly stated that she just didn’t “feel comfortable with a lot of people that
are there (the morning school).” At the beginning of the year, she reached out to all of her students’ teachers to introduce herself and explain some ESL policies that would affect their classes. Natalie did believe that there were a couple of approachable teachers at the morning school, but she was still doing her “best to match names and faces.” It appeared that Natalie was attempting to become a member of her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), but had yet to gain much acceptance.

**Analysis of Natalie’s First Few Months**

It was clear that Natalie brought her past experiences and expectations to her first year of teaching (Bullough et al., 1991). She seemed to minimize the influence that her teacher education program had on her in the areas of race and parents. Natalie had an awareness of her own white identity and its possible effect on her teaching experiences and parental interactions. She was very concerned with being culturally aware and accepting of her students and their parents. She did not provide a great detailed list of expectations, but overall she did hold to some traditional beliefs about parental interaction with the school, such as helping with homework (Winters, 1993) and attending conferences (Tutwiler, 2005).

Natalie did not spend much time detailing her experiences with or expectations of parents of color, but rather with non-English speaking parents. Natalie advocated for parents who did not speak English by seeking out additional translation services. While Natalie expressed disapproval of some of the district’s choices and methods of reaching out to parents, she seemed to ascribe to most of its requirements of teachers.

Natalie clearly did not feel like she fit in with the other teachers and felt that she could not discuss issues with them (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). She definitively
labeled herself as an outsider and blamed her role as an ESL teacher and as a traveling teacher. She believed that she did not quite belong because of the differences between her teaching requirements and the rest of the teaching staff. She did not seem to have made any strong connections at either school at this point in the year.

**Middle of the Year: Socialization Versus Agency**

Throughout the middle section of Natalie’s year, she continued to hold fast to her beliefs about her role as the ESL teacher. To a certain degree, she was aware of the happenings in the district and had strong opinions. Natalie continued to be very strong-minded and did not seem to worry about speaking her mind to me or to people in her school. She appeared to be of the mentality that she was doing her job to the best of her ability and did not worry about approval from others. In this section, I analyze the effects that her past and current influences had on her constructions of parents of color. Specifically, I report her conclusions of parents (of all races) I based on her anecdotal responses. I demonstrate how her sense of agency conflicted with her acceptance into her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Essentially, while she resisted dominant views and influences, she was situated on the periphery of the school community.

**Past Influences on Natalie’s Current Choices**

Natalie’s first year of teaching was influenced, but not entirely framed by her past experiences. While she seemed to have traditional views of parental involvement and school as an institution, she kept an open-mind as she proceeded into her first year. She did not mention her teacher preparation program too often. She simply stated that its philosophy of parental interaction (as with many other areas) did not correspond with the realities of her school (Stanulis, Fallona, & Pearson, 2002). However, she did still rely on
the methods of parental involvement that she learned during her student teaching. Natalie explained that her first placement did not prepare her, but the second one taught her important lessons about parental involvement. She had observed successful methods and “basically copied that format.” At this point in the wintertime, she was still reaching out to that second cooperating teacher for advice.

Natalie rarely referenced her own upbringing, except to say that her own parents would never have taken her word over a teacher’s. “My parents never trusted my word over a teacher’s. But now it’s like they trust their kid saying they will take it to the grave.” Natalie’s own experience prevented her from understanding why certain parents would side with their children over a professional. Also, she stated that her parents cared but also instilled fear in her. She grew up knowing that she had to “respect [her] elders.” From the limited information and rare references across the middle portion of her year, it was evident that Natalie was not consciously thinking about her prior experiences. She seemed focused on her current situation.

**Socialization and Current Influences**

In the wintertime, she felt that her identity was very much one of a first-year teacher. In reference to disagreeing with some veteran practices, she explained that she “was not anybody to say anything to someone who has been teaching as long as they have.” She explained that she tried to “be as quiet as possible and not say anything to anybody.” She felt that it was better for her to simply listen than to speak. She rather be tenured before really starting to share her feelings and opinions with other coworkers. On several occasions, Natalie explained that even if she was upset about something, she would not have “spout[ed] about it” because of her concern for job security (Huling,
She explained that, “I don’t know people well enough and I would rather get tenure before I started doing it [vocalizing her thoughts on an issue].” Also, she had yet to attend any events or activities at the school. She stated that she “kind of [didn’t] know [her] place” yet.

Natalie continued to exist in her own classroom. She still blamed being an ESL teacher and a traveling teacher as the reason why she had not made many connections in the school. Furthermore, she discussed how most teachers exist in teams, but she was different. While she seemed aware of the macrolevel decisions and actions, she did not seem too in touch with the microlevel interactions between teachers. By the spring, her relationship with her classroom aide was less than friendly. Natalie concluded that students did not like the classroom aide who only agitated problems with comments like “go back to your country” to the kids. Also, she and her aide disagreed over calling home to speak to the father opposed to just a parent. Natalie explained, “she [the aide] doesn’t handle things the way I want to. And she has got about twenty years in the district and I have got one, but I’m still the teacher and that’s a very hard dynamic for me to justify.”

Thus, while she was the teacher, she also knew that her classroom aide had been working in the district for twenty years. It appeared that Natalie wanted to respect her aide’s longevity and experience, but felt that she should have the ultimate authority in the classroom as the teacher.

Natalie stated that she did not have much interaction with other teachers at the morning school. She did not provide any anecdotes of the culture, gossip, or staff at the morning school. In the afternoon school, she had a friend from her teacher preparation program who just so happened to be recently hired as a replacement teacher. It was an
existing friendship, not a new one. This friend seemed to be conveyer of gossip in the school. Natalie explained that she had “missed a lot” because she “was not making it a priority to eat lunch in the beginning” of the year.” However, this friend was “catching it” and shared the information with Natalie when they were alone.

From the friend, Natalie had learned that veteran teachers would make misbehaving students call home in the middle of class. She stated that those teachers would “call the parent and say ‘Your child is in my class right now misbehaving. Can you talk to them?’ and put the child on the phone with the parent.” Natalie was highly critical of this method. Furthermore, she had heard that some parents were not helpful and that when teachers called home that they basically just acknowledged the teacher. She thought that these teachers probably expected parents to react with words such as “I’m going to come right down and take care of that and you are not going to have a problem. But the kids - they are having these problems with, the parents are not supporting. The parents are talking back, the parents are saying, ‘well you know he didn’t have to do that or he didn’t have to do this. Why are you telling him to do this?’...like I have heard stuff about parents basically like undermining the teacher, saying the teacher is lying and then it becomes an issue.” Natalie clearly stated that the parents who did not have the expected reactions were “not supporting” and were simply making excuses for their children. She had also heard that parents “undermine the teacher” by going to the principal to complain about the teacher’s methods. Natalie expressed sympathy for those teachers and felt that it must be “really frustrating” to have to defend oneself after dealing with misbehaving students and lying parents.

Natalie did not adopt the attitudes of her co-teachers, with the exception of their
opinion on a new vice principal. Even though she had not had any interaction with this administrator, she was well-aware of the reputation. At first, she reserved her judgment, but then later seemed to be agreeing with the consensus. Natalie was able to give examples of how this vice principal had overruled teachers and did not have a “good strategy.” Even though, she had not had any such experiences, Natalie learned and accepted the overall feelings of the staff towards that administrator.

As the year continued, Natalie did not seem to make friends in either school (with the exception of the aforementioned replacement teacher). In the spring, she felt that she had gotten to know her students’ other teachers. She stated that she had “gotten a lot better with knowing how the teachers” were in terms of personality. She felt that she knew better how to get them to do what she needed for the kids. Even though the other teachers did not take her up on it, she had offered to call home on their behalf. Natalie seemed to be reaching out, but her connection was still entirely based on students.

Natalie’s isolation was only exacerbated by the lack of contact that she had with her mentor. Natalie explained that she and her mentor had not been “doing a good job seeing each other.” She explained that all of the other mentors in the district received training, but hers did not. “My mentor teacher never went through that program and then they said they would train her and they never did.” Natalie knew that her mentorship should have been more purposeful than Natalie simply calling her mentor and saying, “I don’t have anything to talk about this week.” She stated that it was difficult since her mentor was in another school and that they were not making it a priority to see one another. Even though, the mentor worked in an elementary school right “down the road,” it seemed “inconvenient.” Natalie explained that at the beginning of the year she had
been calling her mentor, “but it’s also - like - it’s inconvenient and a lot of stuff. I am just troubleshooting on my own at this point.” Natalie realized that they were going to have to produce documentation of their meetings and that they would have “to backtrack and go through that.”

Natalie seemed to respect her mentor teacher’s advice, but did not solicit it very often. She even compliment her mentor for running a monthly parent invite where parents can come and do homework with their children after school. Natalie explained that she was the type of person to avoid asking questions, especially as a student. She stated that she was often “embarrassed to ask questions.” She was the type of person who asked questions if she needed to, but that she rather “tried to figure it out” on her own and just “handle it.” She seemed to prefer on-the-job training opposed to seeking out help (Flores, 2006a). So, while Natalie seemed annoyed that her mentor did not follow protocol, she also claimed that she was not the type of person to use a mentor.

She explained that there was a new teacher committee run by the assistant superintendent, the district language arts coordinator, and the district math coordinator. The fall meeting focused on special education and communication. She was unsure what the other meetings would be about but she thought the next one would not meet until February.

In the wintertime, Natalie was concerned with the union as she seemed to have become more aware of its presence in the school. Natalie very clearly stated that she was unsure how she felt about the union. She stated, “I’m wary about it. I don’t know how I feel about a union.” For example, she explained that she would have preferred to have direct contact if someone had a problem with her, opposed to having the union facilitate a
The only consistent connection that Natalie discussed was her supervisor. She explained that she would go to her supervisor (who was also a vice principal) for advice on what she referred to as “logistical problems.” She felt that he did not know “a lot of stuff” about ESL, but she would approach him about problems she was having with the structure of the program. She knew that she had to follow proper protocol and run any ideas by him, even though it was the assistant superintendent who had ultimate authority. She felt frustrated that she had to go through a middleman. Natalie explained her supervisor “may not know what he is doing, but he is a very big supporter of me…And he definitely listens to my advice and wants to see me kind of progress and work through this. So even though he may not know the terms for things or he may not know why something is not working. He will trust me if I say this is not working.” He was “a big supporter” of her, listened to her ideas, and wanted to see progress in the ESL program. She felt that he “trusted” her when she offered ideas or explained problems and that it was “a cooperative effort.” Overall, she felt that the administration was supportive even though “a lot of the other teachers [were] having problems with them.”

As the year continued into the spring, the climate of the school began to change and Natalie began to be more in touch with the staff. Given the intense economic upheaval of the school year, the budget became a pressing concern in most districts. Natalie spoke to the budget issues in her district. She explained that the budget had passed, however, the school climate remained charged before and after the vote. As the budget approached, people were thrown “into a panic. There were immediate union meetings at the end of the week,” explaining what was going on with the district cuts and
how jobs/extras were going to be eliminated. She described everyone as “walking on eggshells” because of the tentative cuts. She stated that it had “been really tense” and everyone was being “wary” with whom he/she spoke about the budget. She felt like everyone (tenured and non-tenured) was talking about the budget issues. Natalie stated that she interacted mostly with tenured staff because there was not many non-tenured staff at the middle school level. She explained that there was a great deal of “contention” because one of the principals received perks, such as a rental hotel room because of how far he would have to commute and a leased car. She said that she heard that the district was “paying for all of this crap.” She stated that, “at least that’s what they’re saying. I don’t know.” Obviously, Natalie had heard gossip about this principal as she seemed to become more aware of what others were saying.

It appeared that Natalie did not feel a sense of loyalty or obligation to the district. She stated that she would freely move to another place and had even kept herself on a job availability notification mailing list. While she seemed aware of what was going on in the school, she did not seem to worry about her job or other staff who were in jeopardy. She did not form any alliances or friendships in this steep job panic.

Furthermore, Natalie’s uncertainty about the union turned into disapproval. In the spring, Natalie learned that her job was going to transform into a maternity leave replacement and consequently be outsourced to a private company responsible for all substitutes and maternity leave replacements. Natalie noted that it was strange to go from “flying high” thinking she had a job to knowing that there was nothing she could do to save her job. Consequently, she no longer wished to be part of the union (which is the greatest symbol of teacher unity). She felt that the union was not trying to help non-
tenure teachers and was frustrated that she had spent $2,000 in union dues to ultimately get “fired.” She stated, “I almost feel like at this point why did I pay the union $2,000 because… and not that this is what that's about, but why did I pay them $2,000 to ultimately fire me?” She continued by stating “I would rather not be in the union and just deal with these people directly than have to worry about any of that.” Clearly, she rather just have advocated for herself because, at that point, she had no purpose for the union.

Furthermore, Natalie was aware and unhappy with the treatment of her ESL students by some of her coworkers. “While some teachers are helpful and have adjusted to having second-language learners in their classrooms, other teachers misjudge students.” She provided an anecdote about a teacher who would complain to her about ESL students speaking in their native language during his class. She believed that the students were trying to help one another, but the other teacher believed that they were gossiping. She seemed to be upset about how this veteran teacher had handled the issue.

When responding to the question concerning what other staff members said about parents of color, Natalie claimed that she had not heard much about race. She did state that SES seemed to matter to teachers. She provided an explanation of the way that SES affected the district’s middle schools. She left room for biased teachers to exist in the school system, but stated that she had yet to encounter any.

**Development of Expectations of Parental Involvement**

By spring, Natalie’s definition of parental involvement emerged. She explained that involved parents “show concern for whether or not the kid has homework.” Also, “they show concern for whether or not the kids is getting As or Bs in classes” and parents are “making sure that they do their homework.” She felt that parents who made sure that
their kids were doing their work at home were involved and “trying to do what they can”
to help their children’s futures. She stated that she had parents who were “involved and
interested in school” and then parents who only came to back-to-school night and parent-
teacher conferences. It was clear that she felt that those involvements were not enough.

Natalie had reached out to all of her parents. She was pleased to report that
“almost all of the parents came” to conferences, which according to her had been the
opposite experience for ESL teachers in the past. She believed that the parents did not
attend conferences in the past because of “a fear that [they]’re not going to know what’s
going on.” Natalie specifically explained that those parents did not lack interest in their
children just because they did not attend conferences. Therefore, to combat low
attendance, she had independently decided to send home a letter with the students and
made the parent sign the form. She gave several options on the letter. Parents could come
to the traditional evening conferences, request a phone conference, or request another
date. She made it a homework grade for students and “eventually got…pretty close to
100%.” Natalie did not perceive a lack of response from parents as them being
uninterested in their children, but rather as a “disconnect.” In several cases, the student
came to translate for his/her parents. She stated that she welcomed and trusted students to
authentically translate. She explained that she also asked students to tell their parents that
it was acceptable for them to bring a third party to translate. Additionally, the district paid
her aide to attend conferences as a translator. During the conferences, she made sure that
parents knew how to reach her and that she was available to answer any concerns that
they had. She also attempted to collect contact information of any third party translator
whom the parents trusted. Natalie appeared to be strongly advocating for and inviting of
parents in her classroom.

Natalie’s position as an ESL teacher often introduced a third party into the parent-teacher relationship. Natalie was well aware of the translation services available in the district and used them to her (and the parents’) best interest. She actively sought translation of materials for non-English speaking parents.

Due to some classroom management issues and discipline problems her students were causing in the school, Natalie stated that she was “aggressively contacting parents.” She felt that she had “more confidence” when contacting parents. She stated that she “kind of bit the bullet…and stopped trying to protect [the students].” She felt that the parents did “really need to know” what was going in school. Natalie stated that she preferred emailing parents. Even though she had called parents, Natalie still felt “kind of nervous to call parents because I am a new teacher and…I don’t know quite what it is, but I am uncomfortable with that. So trying to kind of get my feet more wet and get more comfortable calling parents and more used to this.” She continued to explain that most of her phone calls had turned out well, but she still felt like she was not “really sure that [she] kn[е]w exactly what to say” to parents. She thought that perhaps her hesitation to reach out to parents was out of the desire to cut students a break. She felt that the situation would have to be “fairly bad before” she called.

**Solidification of Natalie’s Constructions of Parents of Color**

As the year progressed, Natalie drew concrete differences between the various nationalities of parents. While this study focuses on parents of color as being black/Latino, Natalie’s interactions with Asian parents framed her understanding of parents of color. I, therefore, use Asian parents in the analysis of Natalie’s constructions
of parents of color. She considered all of her parents to be of color and realized that that made it difficult for her socially and linguistically to interact with them. She stated that, “all of my students’ are of color, so interacting with their parents can be challenging socially, as well as the language barrier I encounter.” She had students from Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, as well as Spanish-speaking students from various Latino countries. In person, Natalie was unwilling to make “generalizations about a group” because she felt that her numbers were limited samples. However, Natalie analyzed each group of parents. She detailed the Asian parents’ involvement in school. It seems that the Korean and Indian parents were very concerned with their students’ growth and adoption of the English language. She was pleased that these parents reinforced practicing at home and even tried to help their children. She provided the example that one of her Korean students was required to read a set amount of textbook pages at home in the evening. She seemed pleased with this type of involvement. She believed that Korean parents put great emphasis on grades. Natalie explained that her Korean parents were very involved. She labeled them as “very attentive” and supported her claim by stating that these parents always responded to emails. She felt that Korean parents had high academic expectations of their children. In terms of grades, “it’s not even a question” about how well a student should be doing. She explained that there was a “high caliber of education in Korea,” which influenced the parents’ expectations of their children in America. She described Korean parents as “so involved and so active...they email me back right away, within the next day. They initiate emails with me, which none of my other parents do.” She believed Korean parents to be “much more technology-savvy” than other parents.

In terms of parents reaching out, she stated that Indian parents were most likely to
maintain email communication. She explained that “a lot of the Indian families …are a lot tighter and they kind of are a larger family unit” than other cultures. So, Indian parents would bring in a cousin or a neighbor for school related issues. Natalie explained that the Indian culture views the teacher as having a great deal of power. She felt that as the teacher she was expected to teach and discipline. According to her explanation, in India, parents would pay for their children to attend extra classes and evening tutoring. She felt that Indian parents came to America expecting teachers to be an “enforcer” because of the system in India. She stated, “there is a very different dynamic and I think the parents still expect the teachers to be that enforcer.” She explained that the Indian parents would always support the teacher. Natalie described the teacher’s position as “hands-down [being] everything.” She explained that her Indian/South-East Asian parents were “a little bit more lax” with their kids. They did not enforce homework as much and did not get upset if the child earned less than an A on the report card. She never heard them say “a C is not acceptable to my mom.” Also, she stated that those children would never say, “Oh man, my dad is going to kill me.” She explained that she had little interaction with their parents since those students were not “typically discipline problems.”

According to Natalie, Latino children were much more afraid of their parents than other cultures. “The kids are afraid of their parents. It’s a different cultural thing. You will get a good grade.” Latino children did not want her to call home. She felt that their parents were “involved [and] interested in school.” Latino parents would follow up on homework everyday throughout the year. She felt that they showed involvement in that way. Natalie explained that Latino students would worry about their parents’ response to a low grade. There was a mix of children fearing their parents while knowing that their
parents cared about them. Latino children had to have respect for their parents as authority figures. Latino parents did not “push back so much on the teachers” in regards to expecting the teacher to have all of the power. There was respect for the teacher, but deference to the parents. She stated that there was “fear of what mom or dad [was] going to do.” While the teacher played an important role, Latino parents believed that they were the one that the kids “ha[d] to come [home] to.” Accordingly, in Latino cultures, “kids are supposed to be in school to work ant that’s the message coming from home. There is a much bigger fear of mom and dad.”

She stated that she mostly interacted with the Latino mothers, and only believed that one of them was a single mother. That single mother did not speak any English and was “probably the least involved.” Natalie detailed that several of her Latino students had a white-stepparent. She explained that, “they do have the English at home, technically. And it [didn’t] seem to [her] that either of the white stepparent speaks Spanish. So [she] [didn’t] know how this whole scenario plays out.” Natalie explained that the interaction she had with white parents was limited to stepparents of Latino children. She stated that it might have been a legal reason, but these white stepparents were hands-off when it came to decisions.

In the same conversation topic as Latino parents, Natalie explained that as the kids got older that parents either forced their children to get A’s or stopped seeing school as important and expected their children to work. She explained that she had seen the latter in a more urban district where she had completed part of her student-teaching.

It seemed that Natalie wanted to believe that all of her parents were equally involved in the ways that she saw as fit. However, by the length and wording, it appeared
that the Asian parents fulfilled her definition of good parental involvement. She felt that
the cultural background of her parents influenced their level of respect towards her as the
teacher. She claimed that none of her parents were “Americanized,” so much that they
had stopped supporting the teacher. She felt that their cultures encouraged them to
sincerely thank her for teaching their children opposed to questioning her practices.
When she called home concerning disciplinary issues, she knew that culture would
influence their response.

Natalie discussed white parents and “the thing that white parents do.” She felt that
white parents would “take the side of their kid.” She felt that her experience would have
been different if she taught white kids because she felt that her kids knew when she called
home that “they [were] going to get it.” While she was unsure of what the discipline
would look like, she knew that there would be “some kind of situation.”

Natalie became increasingly more aware and open about her own racial identity
and its impact on her teaching experience. Unlike many white people whose recognition
of whiteness puts them on the defensive (Marx & Pennington, 2003) or elicits anger
(Kendall, 2006), Natalie recognized that her experiences as a white middle class person
affected her relationships with parents of color. To avoid offending parents, she was
cautious in her actions and words. She explained that, “I am often cautious when I have
to interact with parents because I want to avoid being offensive. I put my guard up a lot,
and try to be as clear as possible when speaking.” Additionally, she found that the social
and language aspects really made it difficult for her to form relationships with parents of
color. She stated that she felt like she “stuck out like a sore thumb” among her parents
and students. She believed that being a different race would have enabled her to more
easily relate to students and parents because they would have a shared culture.

So, while Natalie might have claimed that race did not matter in her district, she herself felt that race affected the relationships she formed with parents and students. Her use of “stuck out like a sore thumb” indicated that she felt different from her parents as she was the minority amongst them. She used terms like difficult, cautious, challenging, comfortable, awkward, barrier, and confident, all revealing that she viewed her relationship with parents as a challenge influenced by racial and cultural identities.

**Awareness of District’s Choices and Actions**

Natalie was well aware of the diversity of the district. She stated that the district was diverse, meaning students of many different backgrounds opposed to meaning black/Latino kids existed in the school. Furthermore, Natalie was aware of in-fighting in the school. Essentially, students would ostracize newer students of the same racial/cultural background. She provided an example of a boy in her class who “keeps getting into fights because the kids are saying, the other kids of the same ethnic background are making fun of him.” She stated that it happened in her class, as well as in the school at-large. She provided several examples of students being isolated because members of their own group “refuse[d] to associate with them.” Once a kid became Americanized, he/she did not want to risk being ostracized again “probably...by African American kids and white kids for being different.” In order not to risk his/her acceptance, the student ostracized new immigrant students. She explained, “once they [students] get enough of the status that they are considered “cool.” They have the right clothes and they have enough connections with the other kids. When new kids who see them as potential friends because of the culture or friends...because of the language try to tap into them
and connect with them. If they are already over in this other group, in with the kids of prestige of the school, they will start to mock and start to torture the kids that are trying to be friends with them because they don’t want to lose that status. So it’s a status thing, it’s ‘I have gained this’ and they see other kids as trying to pull that away from them.”

Essentially, Americanized students did not want to lose “their status.” “This kind of cultural attacking back on each other rather than banding together is definitely what’s happening.” She explained that she witnessed different groups acting this way, including Indians and Latinos.

The issues regarding diversity emerged when Natalie discussed the district’s hiring policies. She explained that due to the diversity of the district, that she knew that they were purposefully hiring non-white candidates. She did not seem to have an opinion, but insisted that they were hiring candidates of color with the same qualifications as the white candidates would have. Natalie mentioned that in the superintendent’s annual address to the staff that he discussed the district goal of culturally diversifying. She stated that the district was “realizing that the community [was] a socially diverse community” and should have been “projecting” that in the schools.

Natalie believed that socioeconomic status (Heymann & Earle, 2000) was more significant in the school than race. She explained that the middle schools were distinctly divided by socioeconomics. She stated, “the biggest issue they have - it is more like socioeconomic.” She heard teachers complaining about the other schools. There was great animosity from the lower SES school towards the other two schools. Specifically, Natalie stated, “there is a ton of…animosity between the schools.” The low SES school’s teachers felt that they had the worst students who were pulled from apartment complexes.
Not until later in the spring, did Natalie discuss the racial breakdown of these middle schools. While she had not heard her colleagues discuss race, she had heard that socioeconomic issues were a concern. In a journal response, she wrote, “teachers and administrators (that I’ve heard) don’t use color as a reason to make comment on a group of parents. Teachers do talk about the SES difference between the middle schools.”

While one of the schools had “more affluent students” with professional parents, one of the other schools had mostly low SES kids who lived in apartments. She heard other teachers talking about how the low SES kids should have been more evenly divided between the schools. She stated that there was a lack of unity between the schools, resulting in criticism about what the other schools were doing.

As the year progressed, Natalie became more aware of the demographic breakdown of each of the three middle schools. Natalie explained that the school system had been redistricted after the building of apartments (low SES housing). She had heard a classroom aide in the building state that “it was a fine town” before the apartments were built and “everything went downhill.” Natalie stated that her “assumption [was] that the people living in the apartments [were] immigrants or people that d[idn’t] have enough money to have a house.” Natalie explained the racial breakdown of the three middle schools. One school was primarily black and Latino, while the other middle schools was dominantly white and Asian. The black/Latino school was also the low SES school. It appeared that low SES school had students with the worst behavior and its staff resented the higher SES school for having perks that they felt it did not receive. Discussing the high SES school, Natalie stated, “You go there and the kids are quiet and the hallways are clear and they do everything they are supposed to do.” While the strongest animosity was
between the low SES (black/Latino) school and the high SES (white/Asian) school, the third middle school (Indian/white) also had “hatred” for the high SES school. The low SES/black/Latino school seemed to be more permissive of student behavior and had the “worst collective group of kids.” She also explained that the special education kids from the other schools were serviced at low SES school. While Natalie was aware of the racial demographics of each school and the socioeconomic breakdown, she did not make any connection between race and status. Rather, she relied on socioeconomics and the apportioning of funds as the reason for the animosity between the schools (and teachers).

**Analysis of Natalie’s Middle of the Year Experiences and Identity**

As Natalie’s year progressed, she remained isolated (Anhorn, 2008) and developed no substantial connections within the school. She did become more aware of what was going on in the school and what other staff members were saying. Yet, she did not form a strong relationship with her mentor and seemingly had a contentious one with her classroom aide. Natalie’s sense of independence dominated as she made her own decisions and advocated for her students and parents regardless of the effect on her relationship with her colleagues or supervisors.

Natalie was not overwhelming influenced by her prior experiences or any current acting agents. She was cognizant of the cultural biases that other staff members had towards non-English speakers and attempted to obviate any potential problems. Furthermore, while she was aware of the reputation of each of the three schools, she deduced the contention to socioeconomics opposed to race. It appeared that the racial differences were obvious, but for whatever reason, Natalie did not draw any connections between the socioeconomics and race in the three schools. It appeared that the district
was very much aware that it needed to rectify some of its practices to reflect a more integrated, accepting school environment.

Natalie drew conclusions based on the race of her parents. She concluded that parenting styles differed by race. It seemed that Natalie accepted this fact and tried to encourage all of her parents (regardless of race and/or language) to be involved in her classroom. She made accommodations (such as time availability and translation services) for all of her parents. It appeared that throughout the middle section of her year that Natalie resisted any existing dominant mindsets about students and parents of color. She continually used her own agency and consequently was left on the fringes of the community. She had not been accepted into her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), as she had clearly not adopted the frontstage (public) discourse (Goffman, 1959) or even attempted to gain approval from other actors. As she transitioned into the end of her year, Natalie disengaged even further from others, as she knew that the only job offered to her would be a maternity leave replacement. Her district was essentially planning to remove her as a professional from its community of practice and consequently she felt even less pressure to perform.

**Conclusion to Natalie’s Year**

By the last set of interview and journal responses, Natalie had been informed that a teacher position would not exist for her in the district. Instead, she was offered a contract as a long-term substitute with a privatized company. She would not receive any benefits/insurance and would take a pay cut for doing exactly the same job. She rejected the job largely out of principle. She repeatedly expressed discontent and condemnation of the district for putting her in that position. Natalie spent a significant portion of the final
interview venting about the district’s poor decision making in regards to her employment; however, significant conclusions of parents, teachers, and race clearly emerged in her responses.

**Isolation and Betrayal in her Community of Practice**

Natalie never found a true sense of belonging in Mapleton, and it appeared that she never truly sought acceptance from her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). She repeatedly referenced feeling different than other teachers because she was an ESL teacher, a traveling teacher, and not a member of a teacher-team like all other teachers in the school. She was on her own. Furthermore, she felt that she did not “get any help and that was part of what [her] problem this year was.” Natalie stated that, “there was no help to be found.” While she recognized that she had a mentor teacher, she stated that the mentor teacher did not really help her. Not only was the mentor teacher at the elementary level, but her mentor seemed to have “forgotten that she ever taught in a middle school. So she was helpful for certain situations” but overall did not influence her too much. Natalie “went to her when [she] needed her.” Natalie felt that her mentor was unqualified since she never went through the mentor training. She explained, “we [new teachers] were told that we were supposed to have a mentor teacher that had gone through a mentor training program. We were supposed to be meeting with them biweekly…that’s not what happened with me because she never went through the mentor training program…she didn’t go through the program.” Natalie felt that that made their relationship difficult to navigate since her mentor did not know exactly what they were supposed to be doing. Furthermore, she explained the district “asked us to sign off our paperwork that we basically fudged because she had never been through anything.” She felt that the district
essentially asked her to sign off on the paperwork and unfairly pay the mentoring fee.

She felt that while the school built a support network for new teachers, it was poorly constructed. Its poor execution could have had a worse effect than not having one at all (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005). While there had been a new teacher committee, the last two new teacher workshops were cancelled. And, in regards to her supervisor, she felt that he also did not “have the knowledge of what he was supposed to be doing” when it came to the ESL program. Overall, at the administrative level, she felt that she received some help with discipline, but very little support as an ESL teacher or as a new teacher. She did not feel like it was a “cooperative effort” with administration, As for her department, she did not elaborate beyond stating that she “got varied support.”

The only alliance that Natalie seemed to maintain was her friendship with a former classmate who was hired as a replacement teacher. It appeared that their preexisting relationship established trust. In regards to anyone influencing her interaction with parents, Natalie reported that she had been present while her friend made a few phone calls to parents. She said that “listening to her talk to the parents on the phone…gave [Natalie] a lot more confidence and…like an example of what to do.” Natalie explained that she learned more from that one friend than anybody else.

Ultimately, Natalie left the district feeling betrayed and “disrespected.” She did not seem to have any true loyalties or connections to the district other than to students. It seemed unlikely that Natalie would stay in touch with anyone in the district. She felt foolish for trusting that the district had her best interests at heart. She was clearly disappointed with the way that the district chose to deal with the situation as she had received several excuses and stories about her continuation in the district. She stated,
“how many times are you going to jerk me around and placate me? You told me one thing, this has gone on for two months to keep me here and keep me involved and keep me engaged and I gave my heart to it.” Ultimately, she felt that the district was “really disrespectful” to her by offering a long-term substitute position to do exactly what she had done the past year. She knew that not taking a job was fiscally irresponsible, but “that was okay” because she could not work there knowing how she felt about the district. Natalie said, “I will substitute teach. I will waitress; I will survive. I will do whatever I need to do, but I can’t do this [take the district’s offer].” Clearly, she felt that she had deluded herself into trusting the district.

Reflections on Parental Involvement

In her final responses, Natalie discussed her vision of ideal parental involvement. She believed that it was the school and teachers’ responsibilities to encourage all parents to participate in the school. She questioned the dedication that teachers in Mapleton had to parents, and felt that the teacher-parent relationship should model itself after the teacher-student relationship that gets so much attention. She wrote in a journal response, “I've heard a lot about a student-teacher relationship, but what about a parent-teacher relationship?” She stated that it did not have to be about race, but just about parents. Natalie wrote, “Teachers also need to realize that America is only continuing to grow in its diversity, set aside their personal fears and prejudices, and reach out to the parents on a cultural level. They need to recognize their own culture and that of the parents and continue to make an effort to build bridges between those cultures if they are very different.” She obviously believed that teachers, including those in Mapleton, had biases that needed to be abandoned, especially in reference to parental outreach.
When reflecting on her year as a first-year teacher, Natalie said she would offer new teachers advice. She felt that it was important for a new teacher to be confident when contacting parents. At back-to-school night, she advised gathering as much contact information as possible from the parents. According to Natalie, it was important to go out of one’s way to make the parent feel that the child was supported. She provided her own personal experience of “emailing [parents] back at 9:00 at night…calling them during [her] lunch hour.” She was most successful with parents who knew that she was on their side.

As she searched for a new job, her personal plan for the following year was to contact the “middle-of-the-road parents.” While it had been part of her original plan for year one of teaching, she had lost sight of it. She felt that all parents needed to know that their kids were doing okay. She stated that she would “continue to address [her] needs as a cultural human being, and to learn about others’ needs and how their culture impacts that.” It was unclear how she planned to address these needs, but she did realize the importance of her culture in connection to others.

**Final Conclusions on Parents of Color**

Natalie drew some additional conclusions about parents of color based on her own experiences. She did not blame a lack of involvement on race, but rather used language barriers as a possible explanation. According to Natalie, Asian parents saw the teacher as the authority. She explained, “Hispanic parents, they trust what the teacher says and they follow through with it. Whereas it’s almost like the Korean parents and the Gujarati parents, they defer to the teacher and then they try to enforce it but they really expect you to enforce it more than them. So they really expect you to be the disciplinarian, whereas
the Hispanic parents, at least my experience, are like ‘Okay, this is what needs to get done. This is what I’m going to do and this is what you’re going to do. This is how we’re going to do it.’ And it’s much more this is - here is a fear of mom and a fear of dad, well mostly mom. But there is a fear with the Hispanic parents that the Korean kids are kind of like well…they are more equal to their kids, there is not as much of a separation between the parents.” Furthermore, she stated, “Hispanic parents are, once you get them involved, once you call home, it’s fixed.” She felt that Latino parents are supportive of the teacher while Korean parent defer to the teacher and ask “what do you think we should do?” She stated that the cultural perception of the teacher is “the same thing, but totally different.” Latino parents “trust the teacher” and “follow through” at home while Asian parents “expect [the teacher] to enforce” rules and behavior more than them.” They expect the teacher to be the disciplinarian. She felt that Latino parents saw it more of a combined effort with the teacher having a certain role and the parents having a specific role. She also stated that there was “a fear of mom and a fear of dad” in the Latino culture, while the “Korean kids are kind of like…more equal. There is not as much of a separation between the parents.”

Natalie elaborated on her conclusions using an example of a disciplinary situation that occurred between a boy and a girl, and the subsequent interactions that she had with the parents (one white mother, one Latino mother). She said that the two mothers had such a “difference in interaction” that it “was like night and day.” The Latino boy’s mother and aunt came to school to conference with Natalie after the incident. According to Natalie, the mother and aunt reprimanded him and insisted that he listen to his teacher at all times. “They basically told him off in front of me…they had put their foot down to
the extent that they could.” It was clear that Natalie felt that they “were supportive” of her as the teacher in charge.

Contrastingly, when Natalie interacted with the white foster mom of the girl, she did not feel supported. The girl’s mother “went off on [her]” and threatened to take her complaints to the highest level in the district. Natalie explained the situation and felt that the mother was “willing to let [her] off the hook as a first year teacher.” Natalie was honest with the mother and assuaged her anger by apologizing. She told the mother “I apologize to you. I didn’t know my place, whether I should call you or not.” Natalie felt like she was “already out the door anyway.” The mother stated to Natalie, “I’m going to take this as high up as I can.” Even if the mother had chosen to complain about her to a higher level, it would not have mattered to Natalie. Natalie felt like the white mother saw her as the first step and knew she had other avenues (i.e., administration). However, the Latino mother saw Natalie as the only step. It appeared to be a difference in knowing how to navigate the system. Natalie further judged the white mother’s parenting choices at home. She felt that to a certain extent that the mother was trying to support Natalie teaching English, but also felt that being too “harsh about it…can do the reverse and it can make kids retreat back into their culture and language.”

She concluded that the whole incident was “interesting.” She explained that the Latino boy’s mother sought out additional information about what her son “had done wrong” while the girl’s white mother “was not willing to accept that this could have been in any way, her daughter’s fault.” She felt that the white mother made excuses about her daughter’s rough life and took no responsibility. Natalie explained that the boy’s mother could have talked about other problems at home, but chose not to make excuses. Natalie
did not use this incident to entirely stereotype white parents, but it she did make reference to white parents (not just this mother) being different than other cultures.

**Observations and Judgment of Other Teachers**

Natalie was much more open about what she had heard and observed in her last couple months in Mapleton. It was unclear whether Natalie had become more aware of the happenings in the district or if she was more willing to reveal the truth because she was no longer an employee there. She stated that the district had “low parent participation rate from what [she could] tell.” Furthermore, based on her recommendations, it seemed that Natalie was disappointed by what she saw. Her vision of parental involvement was not fulfilled at the school.

Overall, Natalie concluded that the most active parents were found in the high SES school, which had mostly white and Asian students with professional parents. She stated that those parents “were a lot more pushy… a lot more proactive.” She explained that at the other middle schools that it did not seem that the Parent Teacher Organization had many members, particularly at the low SES school with mostly black/Latino students. Based on her experience in the district Natalie stated that overall she did not “know that there was a ton of parent involvement…it didn’t seem like there was a ton of parents. There were like a handful of faces that I saw, the same faces over and over again.” She clarified that these were only white parents.

Natalie discussed that in the low SES school with mostly black/Latino students, she had heard teachers complain about parents who “would sit there and call the teacher a liar.” She said that “a lot of the parents that were there the most, had kids who misbehaved the most. Mom or dad would come in and demand that [the school] do this or
that, or that their kid wasn’t misbehaving and would deny the whole process.” She stated that it was “mostly African Americans.” She explained that, “the administration would basically let them say…the parents, say whatever and not step in. However, when the parent left, nothing was changed.” It appeared that the administration would let these black parents complain and vent, but did not actually address any of their concerns.

Natalie criticized the outreach that the district made to all parents. She felt that it lacked involvement across races. After reflecting on her first year, she strongly felt that translated mailings needed to be sent and that the website should have been translatable. She wrote in her final journal, “I feel that my district in particular needs to make an actual effort to send out mailings in other languages, and have a true place where parents can get information translated.” She also recommended that the school hire or gather volunteers for new immigrant parents to help them navigate the school system and create a support group for new parents. It appeared that she was concerned with immigrant families, probably because that is the population with which she dealt most. In reference to parents of color (not specifically to immigrants), Natalie suggested that the school reach out to parents through invitations to cultural days. She wrote, “the school should invite parents in with more cultural activities geared towards students and parents of color.”

According to Natalie, she felt that the district should care more about its non-English speaking students since the district was so diverse. She explained that the district was trying to move towards creating a reputation as an academic opposed to athletic school. She stated in her final interview, “I think they [the school district] have got it in their heads that they need to be technology-based and they need to be academically-
minded. And while one of their goals is also to be kind of socially aware, I don’t see that as a big enough push.” Therefore, Natalie believed that while the district stated that it desired to be more socially aware, she did not see that “as a big enough push.” She felt that parents had to be more physically present in school, which meant the district needed to create a more comfortable atmosphere for all parents. She felt that the district was not “embracing the cultures” in the district. The district was hypocritical by expecting teachers to “treat parents with respect and everything like that, but they are not going to follow through on their end.”

Analysis of Natalie’s Final Months

It was very clear that Natalie’s resentment towards Mapleton’s decision to terminate her job position influenced the honesty of her responses. She openly discussed her feelings of betrayal, which further exacerbated her sense of isolation in the school community. At the end of the year, Natalie still had not seemed to form strong connections with any staff member besides her already existing friendship with the replacement teacher. Natalie expressed disapproval of her mentor and the administration for the lack of support that they offered her as a new teacher. It was clear that Natalie felt that she had no where to turn for help and was forced to navigate the school on her own.

Her judgment towards other teachers and the district at-large was apparent. She condemned the district for its lack of acceptance and encouragement of all parents. She felt that the district excluded parents of color and non-English speakers to the detriment of the school. She made several suggestions on how to improve parental involvement in the district. Using anecdotal evidence, she noted that white parents wielded the most power and were clearly involved the most.
When it came to parents of color, Natalie maintained certain conclusions about Latino and Asian parents, and reported on white parents. While she did not draw a firm stereotype on white parents based on an isolated incident, it did seem that Natalie felt that it was typical of “white” behavior. Furthermore, Natalie maintained that Asian parents had a greater interest in their students’ grades, and that Latino parents instilled fear in their children to perform.

Natalie maintained a sense of loyalty to her parents and students. In her plans for the following year (which would not be in Mapleton), Natalie concluded that she would continue to reach out to all parents (regardless of color or language ability). Natalie drew some serious conclusions about the teacher’s need to recognize his/her own race to effectively interact with parents of color. Natalie maintained a strong sense of her own white identity and the influence that her culture had on her teaching experiences. Natalie openly suggested that her district needed to adopt a similar approach to be more welcoming of parents of color. She ended her year without a sense of belonging in Mapleton, but she did maintain her sense of agency and resistance to dominant ideological assumptions about parents of color.

**Final Analysis of Natalie’s Entire First Year**

**District Expectations**

Natalie fulfilled the legal obligations to her district, but opposed their expectations of parents. While they had boasted an interest in retaining novice teachers, clearly Natalie felt unsupported. Mapleton had a mentoring program that was supposed to be structured and overseen by a professional development committee; however, Natalie’s mentor relationship seemed to be almost nonexistent. They spoke when they had to document
proof of their relationship. Additionally, while the district did have a new teacher committee, the meetings in the second half of the year were cancelled. Mapleton recognized that new teachers needed scaffolding and support (Ingersoll, 2001), but did not quite commit to the execution of its plan (McCann et al., 2005).

Most of Mapleton’s requirements of parents were legal in nature. Parents had legal responsibilities and rights when it came to their children’s education. Additionally, the district had a philosophical approach to parental involvement, which seemed to represent an assumption that all parents shared the same values at home (Dunlap & Alva, 1999). The district provided a list of requirements that parents must fulfill. Essentially, parents were expected to instill a certain set of values, behaviors, and interaction style in their children (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999). Assumingly, these values functioned through a lens of whiteness. While the district had expectations of a certain type of childrearing and interaction with the school, it did not account for individual cultural difference. The district did not explain how to achieve these its expectations of fit parenting, but simply required parents to know how to produce successful children. It appeared that some parents were able to successfully produce the required results, which manifested particularly in what Natalie identified as the primarily white (high SES) middle school. Natalie explained that the parental involvement at that school was high and that its PTO had the most members. It appeared that the white parents were able to negotiate the expectations of the district.

Parents of Color

Natalie drew conclusions about parents of color based on her experiences at Mapleton. Throughout the year, she felt that Asian (Korean and Indian) parents were
supportive of their children by contacting her, insisting that homework be completed, and showing interest in grades. She felt that Latino parents had expectation of their children, but also instilled fear in their children. She used examples and anecdotes to support her claims.

Natalie was very concerned with translation services for parents of color who were also non-English speakers. She felt that the school did not do enough to support non-English speakers in the district. Natalie more divided her responses by language than by race throughout the year. Natalie, herself, provided as much support as possible to non-English speakers, utilizing many resources to do so. Natalie advocated for these parents to administration.

**Codes of Whiteness**

Natalie was aware of her race before, during, and after her first year of teaching. She did not change her viewpoints. She seemed to have recognition of her own whiteness when she was in her teacher preparation program. Natalie provided an example of becoming even more aware of her cultural biases through an assignment in the program. However, it is important to note that her teacher preparation program did not seem to be the creation of her sense of her own race. She disagreed with her professor when her professor did not recognize her as having culture. She complained that her professor only saw “the other” (people of color) as having culture (and consequently race) (McKinney, 2005). Thus, Natalie’s awareness prior to teaching was evident from the beginning of the year.

Throughout her first year of teaching, it was very clear that Natalie maintained her cultural awareness and racial acceptance through her recognition that everyone’s racial
identity affected his/her experiences. Natalie arrived at Mapleton with a skeletal frame of how she believed culture affected schooling. She did not clearly articulate every thought, however, it did seem that Natalie desired to not only be accepting of other races, but to acknowledge their individual importance. As the year progressed, Natalie was consistent in reflecting on her own cultural experiences and expectations. She provided small anecdotes about happenings in her classroom, such as a misunderstanding about eating rice for breakfast.

While Natalie made observations about parents of color, she did not seem to make gross generalizations or assumptions about how they should behave. Natalie acknowledged that culture influenced parental interaction with the school, but she did not judge parents for that. She seemed to simply acknowledge and accept cultural difference.

Towards the end of her year in Mapleton, Natalie became increasingly more judgmental of the district. While she had always been outspoken about her views, she specifically believed that Mapleton was hypocritical in its desire to reduce cultural bias and increase parental involvement. She had always noted that parental involvement was low in the district, but she did not seem as open about the racial disparity in parental involvement until the end of the year.

By the end of the year, it was clear that institutional racism definitely operated within the district. The three middle schools were largely segregated by race. The tension and animosity between the schools became a topic of conversation for Natalie throughout the second half of the year. But strikingly, Natalie did not connect the segregation to race, but rather to socioeconomics. It appeared that Natalie could not see institutional racism at the systemic level (McKinney, 2005).
Isolation and Agency

Natalie never became an accepted member in her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). She never spoke of any alliances, connections, or friendships that she developed within the school community. She seemed to excuse away her isolation based on her role as an ESL teacher and as a traveling teacher. She argued that her ESL role positioned her as “different” compared to the rest of the teachers and that traveling between two middle schools meant that she did not belong to either school. However, it was also possible that Natalie’s experience could have been far richer and fuller of connections than had she been a “regular” teacher. Essentially, she shared many students with other teachers and could have built relationships based on those connections. Furthermore, being at two schools could have doubled the number of professional relationships.

Natalie never found her place in Mapleton. In the beginning of the year, she lamented that she was the kid on the playground with whom nobody wanted to play. She also noted that she liked to figure out things on her own, she did not need to seek out advice from others. In the middle of the year, she explained that she recognized her role as a novice teacher, as she lacked the experience of veteran teachers. At this point, she still seemed to have some respect for the veteran teachers and tried not to express her own opinions out of inexperience. As the year progressed, Natalie did not seem to concern herself with what other teachers were saying and doing. She became more aware of the rumors and gossip in regards to the pending budget cuts. At this same time, Natalie began to speak negatively about the school district and rejected the biggest teacher alliance in the school (i.e., the union). Specifically, in a time of the greatest recent fiscal
crisis (Maxwell, 2010), it would seem that a teacher’s allegiance to the union would be stronger, however, Natalie did not have a sense of loyalty to her district and consequently to the other teachers. Furthermore, as she moved into the end of the year, Natalie very openly criticized her district, mentor, and supervisor for not being supportive or helpful. Her claim that she wanted to figure out everything on her own seemed to have disappeared and turned into resentment by the close of the school year.

**Resistance to Dominant Culture through Isolation**

It is my assertion that Natalie entered the year with a strong sense of racial awareness and sense of her own whiteness. It is unclear whether this mentality affected her ability to be accepted by her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991); however, it is clear that she was not accepted. Most new teachers will adopt the dominant culture of the school (Mueller, 2006; Tozer 1993); however, Natalie resisted the dominant culture of her two school (and the codes of whiteness) and also existed in a state of isolation throughout her entire first year of teaching. Natalie existed on the periphery of the school community. Clearly, her image of a teacher (inclusive of interaction with parents) conflicted with other teachers’ behavior. Natalie never gained acceptance, however, she was able to maintain her sense of racial awareness and acknowledge that her own racial identity mattered. When she reflected on the district at the conclusion of her school year, she noted that teachers needed to rid themselves of their own cultural biases. Clearly, Natalie believed the teachers in Mapleton had cultural biases that influenced their ability to interact with students and parents of color.

Natalie’s beliefs remained unchanged throughout the year as her community of practice had little to no effect on her individual beliefs or behavior. It appeared as if she
resisted the “pressures to conform to an institutionalized teaching role and succeed in
establishing a productive and coherent teaching self and concomitant style” (Bullough et al., 1991, p. 11). Natalie demonstrated a resistance to the teaching culture of the school; however, she also did not gain acceptance. It is conceivable that her lack of acceptance was a result of her agency and resistance, or perhaps the lack of acceptance enabled her to maintain her own agency.

**Supporting the Hegemonic Structure**

Even though Natalie recognized isolated acts of racism by her coworkers, she could not fully see the institutional nature of racism in Mapleton. According to McKinney (2005), she was therefore able to see individual acts, but was not able to recognize how embedded the racism was at the systemic level. Public schools, as with other institutions, reproduce inequity (Figueroa, 1991). Natalie provided no evidence that she saw the institutional level racism occurring in Mapleton. It appeared that she was concerned with individual acts and individual rights, but was unable to see the larger system of oppression. She did not see racism as a hegemonic structure in Mapleton. Interestingly, while Natalie admitted that the three middle schools were inequitably divided, she used the deflector of SES (without justification) to explain the injustice. Natalie could (or would) not recognize that institutional racism operated in Mapleton to unfairly track students of color and displace parents of color.

I posit that Natalie’s silence and isolation became a means to permit the operation of white privilege. Bonilla-Silva (2003) views racism as a structure that reinforces white privilege in order to keep the oppressive system working. As a novice teacher, Natalie questioned her right to speak out since she believed that veterans’ experience granted
them speaking rights. Her insecurity as a novice teacher exacerbated her silence. While Natalie did not desire to be racist or support a racist system, she became a perpetuator by not acting out against the issues that she did see. Natalie’s silence or lack of action against the (limited) racism that she witnessed further empowered the system.

Natalie’s silence and isolation consequently reinforced the hegemonic structures supporting institutional racism. Racial categories (Omi and Winant, 1994) are maintained where resistance does not occur. Her only means of resistance was her isolation. She detached from the system opposed to challenging it. It was plausible that Natalie was choosing to avoid further negative consequences by not challenging the status quo (Lee & Sims, 2008b). Silence about the issues that she did recognize was safer than open resistance.

**Summary**

In this chapter, Natalie’s first year of teaching was explored within the context of Mapleton school district. In the first section of the chapter, I used publically available sources of data to analyze Mapleton’s expectations of parents and teachers in connection with race, language, and socioeconomics. Mapleton’s requirements, obligations, and goals were analyzed.

In the middle portions of this chapter, I segmented Natalie’s experiences into the beginning, middle, and end of her first year of teaching. In the beginning of the year, it was evident that Natalie brought a sense of racial awareness with her to teaching. She referenced her own whiteness and how it affected her as a teacher. She reflected on parents of color, but reserved her judgment of them. Often it was unclear if she thought the parents were doing the right thing according to her expectations. Furthermore, Natalie
seemed to experience the expected isolation that a new teacher would have had at this point in her career. She explained that her isolation was exacerbated by her role as a travel teacher and as an ESL teacher.

In the middle portion of the year, Natalie was clearly still an outsider in her own community. She had not developed any substantial relationships or alliances with other teachers and the school. However, she was able to stay committed to her own beliefs and shared anecdotes of advocating for non-English speaking parents (and students). She reflected on the positive interactions that she had had with all of her parents (regardless of race or language).

By the end of the school year, Natalie was fully resisting the culture of the school as she felt betrayed by and distrusting of the district. Natalie had never gained acceptance into the Mapleton school district. Since her job had been terminated, Natalie openly discussed her views of the district failing to support parents of color and non-English speakers. She was critical of the support that the district provided her as a new teacher and of its involvement of parents.

In the final section of this chapter, I synthesized Natalie’s experiences in connection to her resistance to codes of whiteness during the socialization process. Natalie had not formed any substantive connections in the district, and was therefore, able to maintain her sense of self and advocate for students and parents of color. It was unclear whether Natalie’s resistance to dominant white norms excluded her from acceptance into her community of practice or if her exclusion from her community of practice enabled her to maintain her sense of agency.
Chapter VII

Discussion

In this chapter, I synthesize my findings of both Natalie and Lindsay’s experiences with and constructions of parents of color as first-year white teachers working in diverse public schools. I use their cases to build the argument that past influences (such as one’s own schooling and upbringing) and current influences (such as peer relationships and district expectations) fundamentally structure the relationships that the new teacher will have with parents. I argue that whiteness affects novice white teachers and their positioning of parents of color. In the first section of this chapter, I explore the limitations of my conclusions based on Lindsay and Natalie’s experiences. In the second section, I explore how past influences continue to shape the novice teacher’s first year. Next, I use Crimson Rock and Mapleton school districts to argue that school-level expectations affect the individual teacher’s experiences with and constructions of parents of color. I discuss the evolution of Lindsay and Natalie’s experiences and conclusions of parents of color in their classrooms and in the school at-large. Finally, using the existing research, I synthesize my argument by concluding that the socialization process and whiteness profoundly affect the individual teacher’s ability to adopt or resist the dominant culture. The chapter concludes with the significance of this study and recommendations for practice and future research.

Limitations to the Study

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, limitations exist in every study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), including this one. While the data sources were rich, varied, and triangulated, it is possible that my conclusions were limited to just Lindsay
and Natalie’s experiences. It is important to note that several issues (and possibly additional ones unbeknown to me as the researcher) might have affected my findings. First, the difference between the structure of Natalie and Lindsay’s jobs might have affected their experiences and reportings. Natalie was an ESL and traveling teacher, which could have possibly affected her experiences in regards to interaction with colleagues and socialization. Also, since Natalie’s job as an ESL teacher focused so much on the assimilation of people of color into mainstream education, her exposure to the effects of culture might have been more substantial than Lindsay’s, I must also acknowledge that personality differences could have affected their experiences. While neither woman was shy or quiet, Natalie did seem more open and talkative throughout the year. Their personalities might have also influenced their interactions with peers and parents. Additionally, Natalie’s job termination might have affected her final conclusions about Mapleton School District, while Lindsay’s reappointment clearly influenced her end-of-the-year experiences.

In the following sections of this chapter, I draw conclusions based on the two case studies as a whole. I then use both case studies simultaneously to build an argument about the overarching experiences of first-year white teachers and their constructions of parents of color. With recognition that my findings may represent isolated experiences, I use comparative and contrasting findings to prove my argument.

**Lindsay and Natalie’s Past Experiences**

One finding of this study is that past experiences affect the first-year white teacher’s experience with parents of color. While obviously Lindsay and Natalie had had different experiences throughout the course of their lives, they share remarkably similar
biographies. New teachers arrive at their first year of teaching with operating assumptions about school, students, and parents (Clark, 1988; Weinstein, 1989). It appeared that Lindsay and Natalie both arrived at their schools with expectations of parental involvement based on their own experiences (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). As Lindsay’s parents were able to fulfill traditional parental involvement and navigate the school system, she expected her students’ parents to do the same. Similarly, Natalie referenced her parents and their expectations of her as a student. While Lindsay used her parents as the measuring stick of successful parenting, Natalie acknowledged that her parents were successful, but that their style was not the only one. Regardless of the extent, both participants carried expectations with them using their own parents as models of effective parenting. Like many white, middle class families, it appeared that both Natalie and Lindsay’s parents shared the same culture as the school and were able to navigate the school system (deCarvalho, 2001).

Novice teachers have preexisting constructions of their own racial identities and those of others. Lindsay insisted that she did not hold any racial biases since she had been exposed to so much diversity in her life. The reality of her early and secondary schooling was that she existed within a white town and in white classes (despite the overall student diversity of her secondary school). Lindsay’s early approach to race was to insist that it did not matter. She seemingly adopted colorblind practices by which she did not acknowledge the role of her whiteness (Loutzenheiser, 2003) in the lives of people of color. However, Natalie arrived with a cultural awareness that was certainly developed prior to her education in the teacher preparation program. She provided proof that she already had an awareness of her and others’ races before even entering the teacher
education program. As she entered Mapleton’s School District, Natalie clearly acknowledged that race mattered in her life and in the lives of her students/parents. Unlike most, at times Natalie recognized her own whiteness and saw her own race as having culture (McDermott & Samson, 2005).

**Mapleton and Crimson Rock’s Expectations**

From the data collected, it was clear that the two school districts’ expectations guided the first-year white teacher’s interactions with all parents, including parents of color. In their demographic data, Crimson Rock and Mapleton were very similar school districts and I used similar data sources to construct their images. It appeared that both districts (to some extent) desired to project an image of acceptance and to involve parents; however, that was far from reality. Mapleton had clearer expectations and directions for parents than Crimson Rock. While it built its image of parental involvement based on white cultural norms, Mapleton did acknowledge its desire for parents to be involved. Natalie’s year was less amorphous than Lindsay’s in regards to fulfilling her district expectations. Not surprisingly, Natalie experienced a district that was trying to scaffold the first-year teaching experience through new teacher meetings and a structured mentoring program. While the district fell short of fulfilling that plan, it did acknowledge the importance of training novice teachers. Furthermore, Mapleton was more open than Crimson Rock about the diversity in its district and potential inequity that might exist (i.e., goals of reducing overrepresentation of students of color in any particular school, desire to increase black students’ test scores, and interest in hiring a racially diverse staff). Additionally, non-English speaking parents were given limited translation opportunities in the district. Accordingly, it appeared that Mapleton did
acknowledge, but not wholly encourage the role of non-white students, staff, and parents in its district. Crimson Rock, on the other hand, failed to create a solid image of parents, new teachers, or race in the district. It seemingly did not acknowledge that race played any part its school system, which Lindsay echoed throughout her year. Furthermore, translation was not offered, which reflected the district’s lack of concern for non-English speakers. Lindsay also minimized the needs of non-English speakers as she managed to make it through the majority of her year without reaching out to single Spanish-speaking parent. Lindsay insisted that she did not know the available resources, which seemed to be to the fault of the district.

Anhorn (2008) argues that unclear expectations, among other elements, shape the experiences of first-year teachers. I argue that not only the unclear expectations, but also the unclear image of the district shape the experiences of the first-year teacher in connection to parents of color. Both participants struggled to understand not only what the district wanted, but what the district believed on a larger philosophical level about parents and race. The district’s public image reflects its internal organization and culture. Consequently, the novice teacher who enters the district will attempt to adhere to the district’s projected image. The less defined the image or construction of the teacher or parent role, the more unsure the novice teacher will be navigating the system. Additionally, as did Lindsay, this novice teacher will be less likely to complain about district’s support and/or unclear expectations because he/she cannot complain about something that he/she does not realize could exist. Therefore, the novice teacher takes on the full responsibility of navigating the system. Conversely, when the image of the district is clearer then it is more likely that the novice teacher will learn how to navigate
the system. As did Natalie, this novice teacher will be able to see the gaps in the expectations and/or support system since it leaves the novice teacher stuck with only partial help. Thus, limited district expectations mask the struggles of the novice teacher, while the underdeveloped expectations reveal the reality of what could be (but is not) to the novice teacher.

**Lindsay and Natalie’s Awareness of Race**

Lindsay and Natalie brought a level of awareness of their own race to their first year of teaching. When novice white teachers are placed in racially diverse school districts, they are forced to recognize their race and/or that of the student population. In this study, both participants had an awareness of being white in a predominantly non-white environment; however, their perceptions of their own race varied. Lindsay was aware and nervous that her race would affect parents’ opinions of her. She worried that as the stereotypical white girl (self-identified) that she would not be taken seriously. At times, she insisted that her race did not matter as seemingly a shameful admission (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), but clearly it shaped her experiences and expectations of herself, her students, and their parents. Natalie also realized that she was a white person in a non-white environment (i.e., a classroom of non-white students); however, she was often aware of letting her white identity dominate her students of color and their parents. At moments, she recognized her own whiteness and attempted to resist the easy pattern of expecting parents and students to behave by white norms.

**Lindsay and Natalie’s Development of Constructions of Parents of Color**

Individual experiences with parents of color helped shape the participants’ conclusions on and stereotyping of the parenting styles by racial groups. Lindsay and
Natalie were both initially reluctant to share conclusions on parents of color. At the beginning of the year, both women insisted that parents of color were supportive of them and did not draw many clear markers of how race influenced parental involvement. However, as the year progressed, Natalie and Lindsay became more open about their conclusions in regards to the involvement style and intensity of parents by race.

Specifically, Natalie had much to say about Asian/Indian parents and seemed to approve of them as involved and supportive. She believed that Latino parents were involved and instilled fear in their children; however, she emphasized the role of Asian/Indian parents as successful. In regards to white parents, Natalie had limited interaction, but believed that white parents would “do that thing that white parents did.” She provided her own example of a white parent trying to usurp control and get her in trouble as a teacher. While Natalie was aware of differences in parenting style by race, she did not openly label parents as successes or failures. On the other hand, Lindsay’s constructions of parents of color were based on her experiences and others’ interactions. At first, Lindsay insisted that black parents were the most supportive of their children and that she did not have much interaction with white parents. By the end of the year, she explained that black parents were not really that supportive and that white parents were the ones who effectuated change. Lindsay had little to say on Latino parents, but did echo Natalie’s exact conclusion that they instilled fear in their children. Lindsay’s constructions of parents of color progressively became more and more negative.

By the end of the year, Lindsay (who had accepted some dominant assumptions about parents of color) believed that parents of color did not care (Lopez, G.R., 2003) as much as white parents. She expressed sadness in admitting that belief and saw the lack of
involvement (as judged by her traditional white normative expectations) as a failure on the parents’ end (Lopez, G.R., 2003). Natalie, on the other hand (who often seemed to be aware of dominant racial ideologies) never concluded that one parent was less caring or involved than the next, but just acted differently. Natalie saw parental involvement as reflective of the parent’s cultural background, previous experience with school, and comfort level (usually with language).

**Lindsay and Natalie’s Socialization**

In the two cases presented in this study, the participants had opposite experiences concerning socialization and consequently their constructions of parents of color. It is my assertion that isolation allows the novice teacher to maintain their constructions of parents of color (in this case Natalie’s were relatively positive). Natalie was never accepted by her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and consequently was left to construct her own image of parents of color. At times, she recognized that there was inequitable treatment and lack of involvement of parents of color in the district; however, she functioned within her own classroom. She developed no long-lasting relationships and often conflicted with her peers’ and school’s decisions. It was unclear if Natalie rejected her community of practice or if it rejected her. Nevertheless, Natalie’s resistance to the dominant culture was either a cause or an effect of her isolation. It is important to note that Natalie did not reveal much on the dominant mindset/culture because she was so removed from it. The limited data that she did share revealed that other teachers held cultural biases towards certain parents and members of the school community (specifically black parents and non-English, typically Spanish, speakers).

In regards to Lindsay, she did not come to her first year with as strong of an
awareness of race and whiteness as Natalie did. She explained that she had the same expectations for all parents. At first, she even insisted that black parents were the most involved and supportive. At the beginning of the year, Lindsay expressed her isolation and her existence in survival mode; however, a few months into the year, Lindsay had made several friends. As the year progressed, Lindsay’s acceptance into her community of practice became evident, and simultaneously, she began to change her views on parents of color. By the end of the year, she had gained a high level of acceptance and belonging in her community of practice. Concurrently, she had also begun to echo the thoughts of her colleagues on parental involvement and parents of color. It appeared that Lindsay’s desire for and gaining of acceptance shifted her constructions of parents of color.

Compounding the desire (or need) for acceptance, the NJ economic crisis influenced these two novice teachers’ socialization. With more than half of the budgets being voted down (Gewertz, 2010), NJ public schools faced steep cuts at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Both Lindsay and Natalie’s district budgets passed; however, those budgets included staff cuts.

The economy intensified these new teachers’ concern for job security (Huling, 2006). I argue that Lindsay used the economic crisis as a means to tighten her alliances with other teachers and to fortify her identity as a teacher in the district. The budget became a way to bond and connect with other teachers. As already discussed, I assert that the change in her constructions of parents of color resulted from her socialization. This socialization, and consequent acceptance, was quickened by the economic strife. It appeared that Lindsay’s desire for acceptance (and job security) took priority as the NJ
budget crisis intensified. Contrastingly, Natalie was further isolated from her community of practice as the NJ school budget crisis intensified in the spring. She learned that her professional position had been cut, consequently eliminating any future possibility of her gaining acceptance into that community of practice. Natalie felt betrayed by the district and the teachers’ union. Thus, economic strife has the potential to position the novice teacher as the member of the ingroup (i.e., Lindsay) or to fully outcast him/her (i.e., Natalie).

**Addressing the Research Questions**

In this section, I review the research questions of this study, and briefly detail the findings specific to each question. Being that the remaining sections of this chapter greatly detail the findings of these guiding questions in connection to the existing research, this section serves as an abbreviated conclusion of each question.

1. What do first-year white teachers expect of parents/guardians of color?
   
a. Specifically, how do first-year white teachers in diverse public schools express expectations, ideas, and beliefs about parental involvement for students of color?

   From this study, I conclude that first-year white teachers do not have a coherent set of expectations for parents of color; however, their beliefs and ideas about parents of color vary from those about white parents. Both participants in this study articulated beliefs about parents of color based on anecdotal evidence. They drew conclusions about the ways that black parents, Latino parents, Asian parents, and white parents interact with their children, teachers, and the school. Specifically, Lindsay avoided race as any type of issue in her first year of teaching. While, at times, she articulated beliefs about black and Latino parents, she mostly insisted that race did not matter. On the other hand, Natalie
expected that race and culture would affect a parent’s interactions with school, and consequently the student’s academic performance.

b. What are first-year white teachers’ understandings of the roles, successes, failures, and contributions of parents/guardians of color? And how do first-year white teachers come to these understandings?

Lindsay and Natalie used individual experiences with parents of color (and with white parents) to draw conclusions about the degree of successfulness and failure of those parents. Anecdotal evidence was used to draw generalizing conclusions about an entire race. On the school-wide level, both Lindsay and Natalie noted that parental involvement was low (particularly that of parents of color). Natalie used observations about the parents she would see around school and the demographic composition of the PTO. Lindsay listened to what she heard about parental involvement from other teachers, but excused it away as a socioeconomic issue.

c. How do traditional (i.e., white, middle class) expectations of parental involvement shape first-year teachers' understandings of parents/guardians of color?

It appears that traditional expectations, such as helping with homework and attending conferences (Tutwiler, 2005; Winters, 1993) shape the first-year white teacher’s understanding of parents of color. Both participants, Lindsay more so than Natalie, used traditional expectations to guide their understandings.

d. What are the sources (past and present) of these constructions?

Past experiences, such as one’s own schooling and upbringing (Bullough et al., 1991; Clark, 1988; Rumelhart, 1980; Weinstein, 1989), affect the novice white teacher’s
constructions of parents of color. As exemplified through both participants, their preexisting understanding of themselves, school, and parents shaped their constructions of parents of color. Furthermore, the teacher preparation program seemed to have had minimal effect on their constructions of parents of color.

Additionally, the first-year teacher is exposed to present sources that affect his/her constructions of parents of color. Specifically, school expectations provide a framework for novice teachers to follow. These expectations, regardless of how developed, shape the new teacher’s beliefs about the role of parents and race in the district, therefore, acting on his/her conclusions about involvement of parents of color. Additionally, staff or rather the community of practice has a profound effect on a novice white teacher’s expectations, beliefs, and constructions. As exemplified through Lindsay (and not through Natalie), the dominant culture has the ability to transform individual constructions of parents of color.

2. How do first-year white teachers adopt or resist dominant racial assumptions about parents/guardians of students of color?

The ability to adopt or resist dominant racial assumptions about parents of color depends greatly on the socialization process. I assert that the more deeply accepted the novice teacher becomes, the more willing he/she is to adopt the dominant culture (inclusive of racial assumptions). As demonstrated through Lindsay, the novice teacher’s desire for job security mixed with a desire for acceptance guides his/her views on parents of color. Lindsay abandoned her former stance on parents of color as she abandoned her position of isolation for acceptance. On the other hand, Natalie’s resistance to dominant racial ideologies (perhaps prompted by her original racial awareness) exacerbated her isolation. Her lack of acceptance and failure to completely become socialized to
Mapleton made it difficult for her to adopt any other views on parents than the ones that she already had. Consequently, socialization acts on the novice white teachers’ experiences, views, and constructions of parents of color.

**Final Conclusions in view of Existing Research**

I argue that the content of the teacher preparation programs minimally influences novice white teachers’ constructions of parents of color. Both participants reported that the teacher education program neglected to address parental involvement, parents of color, or race in the coursework. As with most universities, Mid-Atlantic State University only offered one course in multiculturalism (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Consequently, my study echoes the research of Bullough and colleagues (1991) who argue that the novice teacher arrives at the school with expectations based on past experiences and information from the teacher education program. However, both Natalie and Lindsay relied on their past experiences with school more than the information from the teacher education program when interacting with parents of color. While Richardson (1996) argues that teacher preparation programs significantly shape future teachers’ perspectives about teaching, learning and the school as an institution, I argue that novice teachers do not rely on the teacher preparation program for information regarding parents and/or race. As Wood and Waarich-Fishman (2006) argue, during the introductory phase of teaching, novices will develop their educational philosophies. Based on my findings, I suggest that philosophies of parental involvement also develop during the initial years of teaching. Thus, the novice teacher’s philosophy on parental involvement will account for the roles and expectations of parents of color.

From this study, it appears that novice white teachers have preexisting
assumptions about parenting that shape their expectations. The findings of this study are aligned with research on how past experiences with school directly affect a teacher’s expectations of how to be a teacher, student, and parent in the classroom (Bullough et al., 1991; Clark, 1988; Rumelhart, 1980). Weinstein (1989) argues that past experiences and assumptions influence the novice teacher. Consequently, these expectations are social products that have a historical grounding as they have been created over time (Bullough et al., 1991). I assert that the participants partially understood their roles and responsibilities based on their past experiences. However, these novice teachers were not wholly reliant on their pasts to shape their interactions with parents of color. Instead, whiteness and socialization framed their constructions of parents of color.

Using the existing research on socialization, I assert that the novice white teacher’s adoption of the dominant assumptions of parents of color occurs concurrently with his/her acceptance into his/her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As demonstrated through the two case studies in this research project, novice white teachers arrive at their first year of teaching with some preconceived ideas about parents of color and some level of awareness of their own whiteness. While the novice teacher initially desires to be as anti-racist as possible, as socialization takes hold of the him/her, he/she will begin to shift his/her constructions of parents of color. As exemplified through Natalie, it is arguable that bringing a deeper level of racial awareness to the first year of teaching influences the ability/desire to be accepted, and consequently affects constructions of parents of color.

Since my findings very much fit within the existing research on the isolating nature of the first year of teaching, I argue that the socialization of novice teachers has a
profound effect on the development of constructions of parents. Both Natalie and Lindsay were “left to their own devices” (Stanulis, Falonna, & Pearson, 2002, p. 79) and experienced a sink-or-swim experience (Gordon, 1991). Each participant conveyed feelings of isolation and insecurity (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002) as her school failed to provide adequate support (Flores, 2006b). I conclude that in the isolation phase, the novice white teacher’s preexisting constructions of parents of color and isolated interactions dominate their choices and decisions in regards to parents of color. At this time, he/she also leaves room for new experiences and the development of individual conclusions. However, as the year continues, acceptance (as demonstrated through Lindsay) and continued isolation (as demonstrated through Natalie) act on novice teachers’ constructions of parents of color.

Fundamentally, the socialization process that the first-year teacher undergoes has an effect on his/her ability to adopt/resist dominant ideologies. While the novice teacher has been previously exposed to the educational terminologies/ideologies through their own school experiences and through student teaching, I assert that the novice teacher has yet to strive for acceptance in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) until he/she enters the first year of teaching. As a student teacher, he/she realizes that it is a short-term, temporary, placement and does not overwhelmingly concern him/herself with striving for acceptance. He/she usually ties him/herself to the cooperating teacher, who consequently becomes the greatest influence (Friebus, 1977). Even though there lacks research on the socialization specific to the first few years of teaching and it is difficult to generalize experiences (Bullough et al., 1991), I used the existing literature on socialization to frame my analysis.
Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that a community of practice is a particular community that new members attempt to join. They suggest that acceptance into this community involves a period of apprenticeship through adopting the specific language and action of that community. In order to function as a member of the “ingroup,” new members (in this case, novice teachers Lindsay and Natalie) must learn the acceptable frontstage discourse (Goffman, 1959) to use with their peers. Furthermore, the existing research suggests that this process of belonging (i.e., becoming a member of the ingroup) depends on legitimation (Olesen & Wittaker, 1968). *Legitimation* is the process through which a new member gains a professional identity and acceptance into the community. However, the individual must desire legitimacy. As explored throughout the findings of this study, I argue that Lindsay became a member of her community of practice, while Natalie remained isolated. I argue that legitimacy might not have occurred for Natalie, because she did not desire it. Lindsay, on the other hand, desired and slowly gained *legitimation* and acceptance.

Therefore, as the socialization process begins to act on the novice teacher, he/she may lose some control of his/her own opinions as a result of the desire to be accepted by the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). To be accepted, the novice teacher must attempt to share the same discourse and culture as his/her colleagues. Consequently, in education, where students, parents, colleagues, and administrators often become the topic of conversation, new teachers are exposed to a way of communicating that allows him/her to self-identify as a member of the community. Lindsay began to accept the dominant language of her school through echoing the complaints and ideas of her colleagues. As will be addressed in the rest of this section, her constructions of parents of
color also began to shift in concordance with her colleagues. However, the possibility of resistance exists within any given context. Some novice teachers (in this case Natalie) are able to maintain their personal beliefs (Bullough et al., 1991). To some degree, Natalie, as Mueller (2006) asserts about prospective teachers, was able to make sense of the system opposed to simply adopting the dominant culture of her school. She did so through the hidden transcript, or rather the social space where resistance can occur (Scott, 1990).

Thus, I argue that constructions of parents of color are profoundly affected by the desire for acceptance into a community that the first-year white teacher has yet to encounter. Furthermore, this desire for acceptance also leads to modeling him/herself after the veteran teachers. Through Lindsay, it became evident that the novice teacher may feel pressure to act in accordance with other teachers’ expectations (Roehrig et al., 2002) out a desire to be accepted in the community. Complicating this acceptance process, novice teachers are greatly concerned with job security (Huling, 2006) especially within an economic crisis. As revealed through the findings of this study, both novice teachers were acutely aware of the fiscal crisis in NJ and the potential threat to their jobs. Both participants became much more aware of the gossip and happenings in the school as pending budget cuts loomed. Lindsay seemed to know that she needed to play the game, and began modeling herself after veterans even more so during this period. Natalie, on the other hand, was further isolated from her community of practice as she rejected the culture of the school during this time period. Natalie essentially spurned the union and attempted to navigate a system in fiscal crisis without the support of other (veteran) teachers. It appeared through the findings of this study that veteran teachers’ job security
may cause novice teachers to believe that modeling themselves after veterans will result in reemployment.

It appears that prior to acceptance that these first-year white teachers use their own isolated interactions with parents of color to justify their conclusions. In this study, each participant interacted with a couple dozen parents, at most; yet both were able to draw relatively firm conclusions about variations in parenting style by race. The individual experiences were used to build generalizing constructions of parents of color; however, I assert that these constructions were also shaped by whiteness through preexisting assumptions and later shifted by active influences in the school district.

I argue that first year novice teachers’ constructions of parents of color directly connect to whiteness. The existing research on whiteness, race, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Whiteness Studies is rich and helped ground the findings of my study. Specifically, “whiteness is a complex, hegemonic, and dynamic set of mainstream socioeconomic processes, and ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and acting (cultural scripts) that function to obscure the power, privilege, and practices of the dominant social elite” (Lee & Sims, 2008a, pp. 1-2). Whiteness is the historic norm (Drzewiecka & Wong (Lau), 1999) in America, including in the public school system. Therefore, novice white teachers enter the school system already influenced by white normative practices. Teachers bring understandings of race to the public school from their own life experiences (Sleeter, 1993). However, while novice teachers have assumptions of successful parenting, most have yet to experience parental failure. Consequently, they have yet to be in a position that allows them to judge the parent of color. Being a teacher grants the novice teacher a new view and a new position of power. With that position of
power, a novice teacher now feels that he/she has the right to draw conclusions on the success of a parent.

The novice white teacher initially states that he/she has no specific expectations or opinions on parents of color because it is his/her truth in that moment. Since the novice teacher wishes to appear anti-racist, he/she states that he/she has the same expectations of all parents. However, these expectations are based on the belief that all parents practice the same normative white patterns of parenting. Teachers expect that all parents have the specific knowledge and ability to fulfill goals (Winters, 1993) reflective of white normative practices that are supported through white privilege. White privilege often grants invisible power to whites based on skin color (Kendall, 2006). As with many white people, novice white teachers (like Lindsay) reject notions of white privilege in order to avoid being racist (Jenson, 2005). However, novice white teachers have benefitted throughout their lives from white privilege, and their refusal to see it, further subjugates the parent of color.

Race works unconsciously and subconsciously (Sullivan, 2006), and consequently is fueled through unspoken assumptions (Figueroa, 1991). I believe that these unspoken assumptions are reinforced through socialization and shape the novice white teachers’ constructions of parents of color. As best exemplified through Lindsay, as the year continues, the preexisting definitions of successful parenting combine with the dominant culture of the school through the socialization process. Based on my data, I assert that the socialization of novice teachers reinforces whiteness, as demonstrated through the white normative practices of the school. In particular, the novice white teacher is further exposed to the dominant discourse that reproduces patterns of whiteness (Wander,
Martin, & Nakayama, 1999) in the school system. The first-year white teacher learns that belonging depends on accepting the dominant discourse, which in these cases negatively positioned parents of color. As the socialization process acted on Lindsay, she began to echo her colleagues’ thoughts that parents of color were uninvolved and uncaring since their interactions did not fulfill white normative practices (Lopez, G.R., 2003). She failed to recognize that families of color, as well as socioeconomically deprived families, may have limited interactions with the public school, but that does not mean that they are uninterested in the academic success of their children (Tutwiler, 2005).

Fine (2004) argues that the invisible norm of whiteness enables a system of advantage that positions minorities on the outside. In this study, it was clear that white, middle class families were better able to navigate the school system (deCarvalho, 2001; Reich, 2002) and that families of color had limited interactions with the school (Tutwiler, 2005). The “educentric” (Dunlap & Alva, 1999) vision of each school district promoted the idea that the home should align itself with the school’s expectations. Both novice teachers in this study did not fully recognize that the school system positioned minorities as nearly inconsequential in the functioning of the school. The invisible barriers were difficult/impossible for the novice teacher to identify (McDermott & Samson, 2005); however, it was evident that both schools set up a system that did not encourage parents of color, non-English speaking parents, and socioeconomically deprived parents to participate. Furthermore, neither participant could identify any racism in the school since she was looking for overt racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lee & Sims, 2008b).

Neither Lindsay nor Natalie addressed their observations of systemic racism.
Their inability or choice not to acknowledge how race worked in the school to support hegemonic structures consequently helped maintain the system. While neither participant stated that she wanted to support a racist system, she was unable to think outside of her own experiences. According to Omi and Winant (1994), racial formation explains how racial categories are created, maintained, and developed in relation to the hegemonic structures. I assert that new teachers (i.e., Natalie and Lindsay) become a means to maintain the racial categories in the school system, and consequently in society.

Lindsay and Natalie had forever been members of the dominant group in the institutional system. They were therefore limited by their past and current existence inside of the system. Neither participant was aware of her existing knowledge or experiences, and therefore accepted the school system as normal. It appeared that the very institutional structure of schooling enabled both of them to perpetuate the existence of racism in education (Jenson, 2005). Lindsay’s complete lack of acknowledgement of racism (at the individual or institutional level) enabled her acceptance into her community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Natalie, however, did recognize more individual acts of racism and chose to remain silent about her feelings. She did not challenge the status quo.

Furthermore, their teacher preparation program failed to reveal the processes of institutional racism. Thus, both novice teachers entered their first year of teaching without recognition or preparation for the realities of how hegemonic structures support institutional oppression (in this case of parents of color). Therefore, I assert that their teacher preparation program functioned as a means to silence the novice teacher. It supported institutional racism by not making teacher candidates aware of the operational
norms and consequent system of oppression perpetrated by the public school system.

By not helping teacher candidates unpack institutional racism, the teacher education program functions as a means to transmit messages about race. These unspoken ideas and/or assumptions then fuel one’s unconscious life (Sullivan, 2006). Specifically, Natalie and Lindsay were not challenged to recognize their own whiteness or understand institutional racism. As a result, both participants were unprepared to resist institutional racism because they could not see how they existed and supported that very structure. I posit that the novice white teacher unknowingly becomes a means to support the hegemonic structures that subjugate people of color either through membership in the community of practice (i.e., Lindsay) or through silence (i.e., Natalie).

I conclude that novice white teachers do not see their role in the processes of institutional racism. As the novice teacher undergoes the socialization process, they are further exposed to the dominant ideologies surrounding race, which combine with their preexisting assumptions about people of color. Since institutional racism is difficult to recognize on the microlevel through invisible norms of whiteness (Levine-Rasky, 2000), novice teachers may feel that other veteran teachers and/or the school are not doing anything wrong. Consequently, the novice teacher who is gaining acceptance into the community of practice will begin to model him/herself after the veteran teacher, which may then reinforce negative constructions of parents of color. Specific to this study, I argue that the novice teacher’s preexisting beliefs and the school community’s dominant assumptions act on the subsequent constructions of parents of color throughout the novice teacher’s first year of teaching.
Significance and Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

This research study further rejects placing the blame on the community and/or family of color and sits in direct opposition with researchers such as Jencks and Phillips (1998), Connerly (2002), Hess, Shipman, Brophy, and Bear (1968), and Hale (2001). I argue that laissez-faire racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) and colorblind practices as perpetuators of racism (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) continue to have no place in the school system. Based on the findings of this study, I suggest that best practice of parental involvement positively impacts the school, the community, and the student (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Consequently, since public schools wield power in society, they should encourage all parents to participate in the school system (Winters, 1993). Unlike the schools in this study, districts must accept and view all parents (regardless of race, language, or socioeconomic status) as stakeholders in the school system. If a parent does not feel accepted, he/she will not involve him/herself (Sarason, 1991).

As detailed through this study, the image and processes of the school influence a parent’s trust and engagement in the district (Decker & Decker, 2003). Consequently, I reiterate Decker and Decker’s (2003) suggestion that schools promote parental involvement through conveying clear expectations, providing translation services, and creating a nonthreatening environment. Specifically, schools need to begin by recognizing all inequitable practices within its system, not simply those isolated to parental involvement. To undo white privilege, the white person (or in this case, the school) needs to recognize his/her role in the perpetuation of inequitable practices. Institutional processes of privilege granted by whiteness must be recognized before personal privilege can be recognized (Kendall, 2006). I argue that recognition must occur
on a systemic level by all decision-makers (Board of Education members, administration, and classroom teachers) under the guidance of a third-party educational leader in the area of racial equity. Once whiteness is recognized then anti-racist practices can be implemented. I suggest that schools reevaluate the traditional markers of parental involvement (i.e., back-to-school night and conferences) since those means often position parents of color (who do not attend) as deficient or uncaring (Lopez, G.R., 2003). Instead, the school needs to create a support system for parents that allows an open-space for dialogue.

Furthermore, most businesses have a public relations person, and I suggest that the school often operates like a business, that it too create a similar position. As students have guidance counselors who should help them navigate the school system, parents should have a guiding liaison to the school. I suggest that neither the school nor the parent can fix the system, but rather a third party must be introduced. A parent-school liaison could function as a means to help parents navigate the school system (as surely even after the recognition of whiteness on the school-level, not all teachers and processes will be free from white privilege). The liaison would advise and advocate for all parents (not just parents of color), as well as advise the school system on how to better involve and encourage parents specific to the school site (recognizing differences in socioeconomic factors, racial demographics, and language).

Additionally, as the focus of this study, I argue that the preparation and induction of novice teachers need to receive more attention in the existing research. Novice white teachers’ constructions of parents of color are shaped during the first year without proper structuring or techniques from the preparation or induction programs. Since the attrition
rates are highest during the few years of teaching (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Gordon, 1991), it is important to study the experiences of novice teachers. As did Natalie and Lindsay, novice teachers use ‘survival strategies’ (Woods, 1977) as a means of self-preservation (Bullough et al., 1991).

Consequently, as Ingersoll (2001) posits, novice teachers need a rich support network to survive the first few years of teaching. I echo the suggestions of Baum and Schwarz (2004) and Anhorn (2008) who insist that teacher preparation and teacher training need to pay closer attention to navigating relationships with parents/families. Based on the findings of this study, novice teacher preparation and induction programs need to be overhauled and begin to address the serious issues of inequitable practices in the school system (inclusive of parental involvement). As with many other programs, theirs did not spend any significant time on parental involvement and/or racial influences on education (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Both women felt unprepared for the realities of teaching (Flores, 2006a), including the realities of parents and race in the school system. The teacher preparation program has an opportunity to build positive scaffolding for novice teachers; however, often novice teachers enter the year lacking a plan. With the overwhelming duties of the first year, the teacher resorts to “survival strategies” (Woods, 1977). It is during this first year that they shape and build their educational philosophies and strategies (Wood & Waarich-Fishman, 2006). If novice teachers were given a solid foundation in the teacher preparation program, then perhaps they would be less likely to simply accept the dominant culture of the school or judge parents of color based on isolated instances during their first year of teaching.

I argue that the novice white teacher is a site of resistance and must be given the
tools to combat institutional racism. Most public school teachers are white, meaning that most racially diverse schools are filled with white teachers (Sleeter, 1993; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Thus, I suggest that novice white teachers are important agents in battling inequity in public education. Figueroa (1991) suggests that since racist frames of reference are constructed, that they can be deconstructed. Subsequently, I posit that prospective and first-year white teachers must be given the tools to recognize whiteness and white privilege. They need to understand how their own racial identity affects their constructions of students (and parents) of color (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005) and “divest” themselves of white privilege (Levine-Rasky, 2000).

Therefore, teacher preparation programs and the induction processes must train teachers in the ways to combat the invisible norms (inclusive, but not specific to parents of color). Specifically, whiteness studies must be incorporated into the teacher preparation coursework (Marx & Pennington, 2003) in order to deconstruct racist frames of reference (Figueroa, 1991).

Specifically, based on Natalie and Lindsay’s experiences, it was clear that their teacher education program had not done enough to help them understand that they were part of a racialized system. While Natalie recognized markers of difference, she did not fully understand that she was a member of a larger oppressive system. I believe that Natalie could have been taught how to voice her resistance. It is clearly not enough to teach one isolated course in multiculturalism. I suggest that early in the teacher education program, teacher candidates take a course in Whiteness Studies. Especially, since most teachers are white (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006), this course needs to help teacher candidates unpack their biases, understandings, and expectations. After
questioning their own privileges, teacher candidates need to continue to be forced to understand the hegemonic structures in public schools that support a racialized system. I recommend that teacher preparation thread ideas of race theory throughout its coursework. Since race is present everywhere (Ladson-Billings, 1999), it is important for teacher candidates to realize that everything from lesson planning, classroom management, and curricula choices to relationships with peers, administrators, and parents is influenced by race. To understand that processes/components of education are influenced by race is not enough. Teacher candidates must also realize that the system at-large is supported by racial empowerment/disempowerment. Teacher education programs do not need to switch their content, but rather their infrastructure and underlying philosophy.

As clearly indicated by Natalie and Lindsay’s experiences, the teacher preparation does not warn new teachers that they are being socialized into a larger system. While the teacher preparation program may warn against teacher-talk in the faculty room, it does not explain the systemic level happenings that often quickly control the new teacher. I, therefore, question if teacher preparation is early socialization that enables the future socialization that takes place in the school system. By not recognizing or preparing the teacher candidate for the socialization process in their community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the teacher education program essentially enables the operating system in the public school. Since the novice teacher is unable to recognize that socialization is even occurring, he/she likely falls victim to the hegemonic structures that support the system. Therefore, in conjunction with threading race theory throughout the coursework and fieldwork, teacher education programs need to prepare novice teachers to voice
resistance during the socialization process.

Future research needs to study the first-year white teacher as an agent in combating the inequitable treatment of parents of color in the school system. Specifically, I recommend that teacher preparation programs dedicate more time to the development of anti-racist strategies for first-year white teachers. Teacher preparation programs, as reinforced through this study, do not make a significant impact on the shaping of a first-year teacher’s beliefs about parents and/or the impact of race in education. Research needs to evaluate how universities do or do not contribute to the racial assumptions that dominate our public school system. Furthermore, while research exists on students of color in the school system, I believe that additional research should evaluate the induction processes of first-year teachers working in racially diverse settings in regards to teacher constructions of students of color. Teacher constructions of parents are directly linked to teacher constructions of students of color. Thus, I argue that students, in addition to parents, are also agents through which inequitable education can/should be battled.

The significance of this study is found in its contribution to the existing research on equity in education. I assert that through understanding how first-year white teachers come to understand parents of color, it could be possible to combat the inequitable treatment of those parents. Parents of color should be more accepted in the public school community, resulting in more equitable education for students of color. Teachers are means to begin encouraging parents of color to navigate and redefine a system that is regulated by white norms. I suggest that teachers are the most direct link to students and parents and thus should be viewed as sites of resistance.
Conclusion

First-year teachers occupy a unique space in the public school system. Their philosophies, assumptions, and constructions are developed during their initial experiences in the school system. Through this study, it was evident that socialization generally affects new teachers’ experiences. More importantly, socialization specifically influences new teacher agency and resistance to dominant racial assumptions. Using the contrasting experiences of two participants, I explored acceptance and isolation in connection with constructions of parents of color. Novice teachers expect, believe, express, and encourage parents of color to participate in the school processes either in accordance with the dominant culture or against it. However, as exemplified through Natalie’s complete isolation and rejection from her community of practice, resistance to dominant racial assumptions comes at a price.

My study attempted to unpack the ways that novice white teachers come to understand the roles of parents of color in light of white privilege clearly existing in the schools. Whiteness at the societal, institutional, and classroom level complicate the novice white teacher’s philosophical development. Consequently, I believe my study’s focus to be only a single element in the important battle to promote racial equity in public education. An entanglement of sources have created and perpetuated inequitable schooling; however, I view first-year teachers as sites of resistance and possible change in a public school system fraught with inequity.
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Appendix A

Letter to Participants

Dear Recent Graduate of Mid-Atlantic State University Teacher Preparation Program,

I am doctoral student in Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education and am looking for participants for my dissertation study.

I am interested in studying first-year white teachers and minority parental involvement. Participants must be self-identified white teachers who will be spending the first year of their teaching career in diverse public high schools.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in four interviews over the course of the year and informally respond to monthly e-mail questions.

The study will take place over the academic school year of 2009-2010.

Your identity will be completely confidential. I, as the researcher, will be the only one who knows your identity. It will never be revealed or published. You will be identified through an alias when needed.

The significance of your participation in this study would be working towards equity in public schooling.

You can contact me via e-mail or phone with the following information or you may return the form in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

Name
Phone Number
E-mail address
Race
Public School where you will be teaching in September
Grade you will be teaching in September

Thank you,

Kayne Ellis
kaynee@eden.rutgers.edu
(732) 580 - XXXX
Appendix B

Response Card from Potential Participants

Name: _____________________________________________________

Phone Number: _____________________________________________

E-mail address: _____________________________________________

Race: ____________________________________________________

Public School where you will be teaching in September:______________________________

Grade you will be teaching in September: ________________________________
Appendix C

Informed Consent

Title: First-year white teachers and minority parental involvement
Researcher: Kayne Ellis
Department: Social and Philosophical Foundations of Educations
University: Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Telephone: (732) 580-XXXX

You are invited to participate in a research study of first-year white teachers. You were chosen as a possible participant for this study due to your recent graduation from Mid-Atlantic State University Teacher Preparation Program. After you read this form, you may ask any questions before making your decision about participation in this study.

This study is being conducted by Kayne Ellis, a doctoral candidate in the Social and Philosophical Foundations program in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences that first-year white teachers have with minority parental/guardian involvement in urban high school settings. The research will focus on ways that first-year white teachers understand and construct minority parental involvement.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in this ten month study, you will be asked to speak and write about the ways that you experience minority parental involvement as a first-year white teacher. You will be asked to: participate in semistructured in-person interviews with the researcher; permit the researcher to collect and analyze artifacts from your school; and respond via e-mail to monthly questions from the researcher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is purely voluntary. Your choice to consent or refuse participation will not affect your current or future relations with the Graduate School of Education or with the researcher. You have the right to leave the study at any time without fear of penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the course of the study.

Benefits and Risks to the Participant
There are no known risks or benefits (short or long-term) connected to participation in this study.

Compensation
There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Initials: ___
**Confidentiality**
All information that you provide to the researcher will be confidential. The researcher will be the sole person who will know your identity and your school district’s identity. The results of this study will be presented at a dissertation defense and may be used in a future study; however, your name and identifying information nor your school’s name and identifying information will ever be revealed.

**Further Questions and Contact**
The researcher conducting this study is Kayne Ellis. The researcher’s dissertation advisor is Dr. Catherine Lugg and she may be reached at (732) 932-7496 ext. 8220 or catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about this study or your rights as a participant, you may contact the IRB of Rutgers University.

You may ask any questions now. If you have later questions, you may contact the researcher by phone at 732 580 XXXX or via e-mail at kaynee@eden.rutgers.edu

**Agreement to Participate**
I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to receive the answers to any questions I may have as to the nature of this study. I agree to voluntarily participate in the above described study.

Participant Name: ________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Consenting Party: ________________________ Date: ______
Researcher Name: _________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Researcher: ___________________________ Date: ______
Witness Name: ____________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Witness: _______________________________ Date: ______

**Agreement to be Audiorecorded**
I understand and agree that the four interviews in this study may be audiorecorded. No names will be used to identify me or my school during the recorded interview. The audiotape will be labeled with an assigned alias.

Participant Name: ________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Consenting Party: ________________________ Date: ______
Researcher Name: _________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Researcher: ___________________________ Date: ______
Witness Name: ____________________________________ Date: ______
Signature of Witness: _______________________________ Date: ______
Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Semistructured Interview 1

Date: Beginning of teaching year

1. Can you talk about what you learned in your teacher preparation program about parental/guardian involvement?

2. Can you talk about what you learned in your teacher preparation program about parents/guardians of color and school?

3. How do you see yourself interacting with parents/guardians during your first year? What feelings do you have about the role of parental involvement?

4. How do you feel that being white will affect your interactions with parents/guardians of color opposed to white parents/guardians?

5. How do expect your school to support or encourage parents/guardians of color?

6. How do you plan to communicate with parents/guardians? How often?

7. Explain ways that you plan to encourage the involvement of parents/guardians of color in your classroom?
Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Semistructured Interview 2

Date: After marking period 1 concludes, around November

1. Can you describe the parents/guardians with whom you have interacted so far this year?

2. What concerns or issues do you have about the involvement of parents/guardians of color?

3. Can you speak about any differences that you have noticed about parents/guardians of color and white parents/guardians?

4. How do you think those differences influence student success?

5. Can you explain any conclusions that you have drawn about the role of parents/guardians of color in your school?

6. What types of conversations do other teachers have about parents? About parents/guardians of color?

7. Can you describe any conversations that you have had with your mentor teacher about parents/guardians of color?

8. What do you believe are the feelings/thoughts of your mentor teacher towards parents/guardians of color?

9. What do you believe are the feelings and thoughts conveyed about parents/guardians of color in your school?
Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Semistructured Interview 3

Date: After midterms, around March

1. How involved are parents/guardians of color? Why do you think they are involved to this level?

2. Can you describe two (2) examples of contact that you have had with parents/guardians of color about discipline and/or academic issues?

3. Can you draw any conclusions about the type of support that your parents/guardians of color receive at home?

4. Can you draw any conclusions about the types of relationships that your students of color have with their parents/guardians?

5. How interested are parents/guardians of color in the public school system? How do you know this?

6. Can you describe the types of conversations with your mentoring teacher about parents? Can you describe any conversations that you have had with your mentoring teacher specific to the interactions with parents/guardians of color?

7. Can you describe a conversation that you’ve had with another teacher about parents/guardians of color?
Appendix G

Interview Protocol for Semistructured Interview 4

Date: After completion of year one of teaching, end of June

1. Reflecting on this past year, what conclusions can you draw about your communication with parents/guardians of color?

2. What realities have you uncovered about parental/guardian involvement? The involvement of parents of color?

3. How successful were you at meeting your initial goals of parental/guardian involvement? Why?

4. Reflecting on this past year, what conclusions can you draw about the involvement of parents of color in your school?

5. How did your school support your interactions with parents/guardians as a first-year teacher?

6. In what new/other ways could your school encourage involvement of parents of color?

7. How successful was your mentor in guiding your interactions with parents/guardian? Parents/guardians of color?

8. Using what you have learned this past year, what advice would you give a first-year teacher regarding the involvement of parents/guardians of color?
Appendix H

E-mail Journal Topics

September

1. What was the demographic breakdown of the parents/guardians attending the back-to-school night?

2. What conclusions do you draw from that breakdown?

October

1. How does your district expect you to communicate with parents?

2. How does your district provide accommodations for parents to be involved at school?

November

1. What was the demographic breakdown of parent/guardian conferences with teachers?

2. What conclusions do you draw from that breakdown?

December

1. What have you noticed about white parents/guardians?

2. What have you noticed about parents/guardians of color?

January

1. What conversation(s)/comment(s) have you heard other teachers/administrators say about parents/guardians of color?

2. What was your reaction/response to these comments?
February

1. Are there any teachers with biased opinions regarding racial equity in your school? Explain.

2. Are there any administrators with biased opinions regarding racial equity in your school? Explain.

March

1. What role do white parents/guardians play in the school?

2. What role do parents/guardians of color play in the school?

April

1. Does being white affect your interaction with parents/guardians of color? If so, how?

2. How would your experience with parents/guardians be different if you were another race?

May

1. How does the school encourage the involvement of parents/guardians of color?

2. How should the school encourage the involvement of parents/guardians of color?

June

1. How should teachers encourage the involvement of parents/guardians of color?

2. How will you encourage involvement of parents/guardians of color, next year?
Institutional Review Board Approval Forms

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

July 31, 2009

Kayne Ellis

P.I. Name: Ellis
Protocol #: 09-016M

Dear Kayne Ellis:

( Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment )

Protocol Title: “First Year Teachers’ Constructions of Parents of Color”

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date: 7/13/2009
Expiration Date: 7/12/2010
Expedited Category: 7
Approved # of Subjects: 6

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval** - The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;
- **Reporting** - ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications** - Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)** - Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review** - You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project’s approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Addition Condition: Authorization from the following research site must be forwarded to the IRB prior to commencement of study procedures at the site(s): all participating schools.

Additional Notes: Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
graser@orsp.rutgers.edu

cc: Catherine Lugg
Dear Kayne Ellis:

(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: “First Year Teachers’ Constructions of Parents of Color”

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Amendment to Approval Date: 11/14/2009  Expiration Date: 7/12/2010  Expedited Category: 7

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval:** The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;
- **Reporting:** ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications:** Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s):** Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review:** You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project’s approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

**Additional Notes:** Expedited Amendment Approval per 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2) on 11/14/09 for Removal of Requirement to Gain Authorization from School Administrators

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA0003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

[Signature]

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
egraser@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Catherine Lugg
Dear Kayne Ellis:

( Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment )

Protocol Title: “First Year Teachers’ Constructions of Parents of Color”

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date: 3/24/2010 Expiration Date: 3/23/2011 Expedited Category: 8a
Approved # of Subject(s): 6 Currently Enrolled: 3

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- This Approval: The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;
- Reporting: ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- Modifications: Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- Consent Form(s): Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- Continuing Review: You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project’s approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes: - Continuation Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110 - PI is to contact the IRB prior to the recruitment of additional subjects or further interactions/interventions with subjects.

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
egraser@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Catherine A. Lugg