



# Does Race Matter? How Teaching Students of Color Shape White Teachers' Identities?

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# Research Question

How does a teacher's race shape her identity in a high school classroom that contains many students of color?

# Thesis

White female teachers are aware of their own whiteness in the classroom with many students of color; however, they are colorblind to race and justify cultural differences based on social class in their classroom environment.

# Literature Reviews

- Lack of Diverse Experience

- Dickar, 2008; Hyland, 2005; Robinson and Clardy, 2011

- Teacher's Racial Identity in the Classroom

- Dickar, 2008; Larkin, 1995; Lesko and Bloom, 1998; LeCompte and McCray, 2002; Milner, 2011

- Changing the Classroom

- Hill-Jackson, 2007; Toohey and Beynon, 2005; Walker-Dalhousie and Dalhouse, 2006

# Standpoint Theory

- Postmodern theory
- Holds that individual's perspectives are shaped by his or her experiences
- Mostly used in Feminism
- Blackwell, 2010; Solomon, 2009, Sosulski, 2009

# Methodology

- Clay High School, South Bend, IN
- Qualitative, in-depth interviews
  - 17 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes
- 8 White female teachers
- Manifest and Latent Coding

# Findings

- Cultural Differences
- Social Class
- Racial Identity in the Classroom
- Colorblindness
- Future Classrooms

# Findings: Cultural Differences

"And then, it's not really necessarily a color issue, that's just a diversity issue. And, sometimes, there are multiple families living in one household too, and that is a cultural thing. There's could be fourteen, fifteen people living in one house in that culture, and that doesn't happen in our culture. I do think, so that is an issue, that is a real issue that you sort of learn through interaction and experiences."

*-Lisa\**



# Findings: Social Class

"I've even had a parent say they weren't gonna waste their cell phone minutes talking to me about their child, so. That one was an eye opener. After hearing the mom say that, it was like wow you're child's doing pretty well now that I've talked to you for just a minute."

*-Jennifer\**

# Findings: Racial Identity in the Classroom

"So, I wrote her up and sent her to the office and got rid of her and got to have class. Her mother called, no I got a message from the assistant principal to call the mother, which I did, and the mother called me a racist and said she was going to go to the school board and other parents had told her I was a racist, and that they were going to get rid of me. I was very upset, I had never been called that before, and, I mean, I was so shocked."

*-Rebecca\**

# Findings: Colorblindness

"I try to be as fair to all and usually, if you're being fair to them, I don't think they care whether you're Black or White or Hispanic or anything. Um, but you have to be fair and one thing I try to do too is, I can be made as a Horner at a kid one day, but the next day that's gone. You know what I mean? I try not to, um, hold grudges. Sometimes the kids feel like the teachers hold grudges, like I have no redemption."

*-Erica\**

# Findings: Future Classrooms

"Um, hmm, I would say, I would say yes, I think there are ways. Um, what they are I couldn't quite tell you. You know, my student teaching and my observation I did at the public high school level, and I think if there's a way to, uh, ensure that educators can do their observations and their student teaching in some way, shape, or form at the public schools. That way they are encouraged to be around a diverse population. I think that would be good."

*-Sarah\**

# Discussion

- Noticed their racial identity in the classroom with many students of color
- All 8 participants use colorblindness
- Lack of Diverse Experience
- Social Class
- Strengths/Weaknesses

# Conclusion

- Teacher's did notice their identity
- Defined cultural differences and social class as more of an issue today than race
- Multicultural training

Questions or Comments?