“Who Would Want to Teach There?”

A Critical Exploration of how New Teachers Conceptualize Geographies of Schooling about Canadian “Inner City” Schools and Implications for Education Policy

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines geographies of schooling in relation to how a group of new teachers in Canada conceptualize “inner city” schooling as a uniquely Canadian construct. The study uses a critical approach that explores issues of race, and their intersections with issues of gender, social class, and other identity markers. Seven new teachers graduating from a 2009-2010 teacher education program in the province of Ontario, Canada took part in this study. As a function of the inner city, the inner city school is problematized as a particular geographical space, complete with its own meanings. Results of this study indicate that new teacher conceptualizations of Canadian inner city schools are not uniform and coherent, but complex, contradictory, and dependent upon each individual teacher’s experiences with difference. Overall, participants demonstrated limited ability to speak to their own racial identities in relation to teaching in such schooling contexts. Because most participants learned to teach in predominantly White field-placement settings, they perceived race to be a non-issue and recognized it as a construct only if raced bodies were present. With respect to issues of gender, participants most often discussed what is often referred to as the feminization of teaching in elementary schools. However, there was a profound sense in which inner city schools were conceptualized as “male space” or as space from which female teachers needed protection. This was informed by a widespread conception that male teachers could more effectively manage inner city students. Classroom management emerged as an issue that concerned participants with the least experience with difference. Finally, there was a direct relationship between the theoretical approaches used by the teacher education program in discussing inner city schooling and individual teacher ability to articulate their pedagogical approaches to teaching in this milieu.
Dedications

To my daughter Kennedy and my husband Eric, this thesis is dedicated to you. Kennedy, my vanilla-bean, you are such a wonderful child; so perfect in every way. What have I ever done to deserve you? Your spirit is one that is loving and free. Thank you for being so patient with mummy and for loving me, even though I spent so much time away from you in order to produce this work. Mummy is so proud of you, now and forever. Sweetheart, thank you for your never-ending support of my decision to pursue this degree. Thank you also for taking such good care of Kennedy when I was away. You are a wonderful husband and a gifted father.

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Magda
Strength Courage Wisdom
Writer Thinker Mother Friend
Who can deny it?
Magda
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii

DEDICATIONS............................................................................................................. iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................... iii

CHAPTER ONE
THE LOUDEST SILENCE: TEACHERS AND THE INNER CITY IN CANADA
Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
Problematic .................................................................................................................. 2
Research Question ...................................................................................................... 8
Rationale and Significance of the Study .................................................................... 12
Definition of Terms ................................................................................................... 15
Employing a Black Feminist Standpoint ................................................................... 19
Reflections on Canada’s Multicultural Identity and its Relationship to Schooling ...... 22
Limitations ................................................................................................................. 25
An Overview of Chapters ........................................................................................... 27

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW
Introduction ............................................................................................................... 30
Reading Race as a Socio-Historical Construct ......................................................... 33
The Intersectionality of Race .................................................................................... 36
Reading Race as a Discursive Category ................................................................... 39
An Exploration of Whiteness as a Racial Standpoint ............................................... 44
Reading Race and Social Class in Education ............................................................ 47
The Racialization of Poverty in Ontario .................................................................... 51
An Examination of Geographies of Race ................................................................. 55
Literature Review: Pre-service Teacher Conceptions of Inner City Schooling ......... 61
Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 73

CHAPTER THREE
MAKING MEANING OUT OF METHODS
Introduction ............................................................................................................... 79
The Impact of Race and Geography in Asking the Research Question..................... 80
An Overview of the Recruitment Process ................................................................ 82
Method: In-Depth Interviews & Focus Groups ......................................................... 84
Focus Groups .............................................................................................................. 85
A Critical Look at the Transcription Process ............................................................ 88
Coding and Analyzing the Data ............................................................................... 89
Locating the Study ..................................................................................................... 93
The Research Participants ......................................................................................... 93
Introducing Earl ......................................................................................................... 95
Introducing Andy ....................................................................................................... 95
Introducing Bredz ..................................................................................................... 96
Introducing Tara ........................................................................................................ 96
Introducing Tristan ................................................................................................... 97
CHAPTER EIGHT
READING RACE, GENDER, AND THE INNER CITY TEACHER
Introduction.................................................................193
A Raced Reading of the Inner City Teacher.................................................................194
A Gendered Reading of the Inner City Teacher.........................................................205
Male Teachers Needed as Role Models for Inner City Students...............................212
Conclusion.....................................................................................................................216

CHAPTER NINE
IF I CAN’T MANAGE, I CAN’T TEACH
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND INNER CITY SCHOOLS
Introduction.....................................................................................................................217
“Academic” Schools Require Less Management.......................................................221
Reading Classroom Management as a Teaching Issue.............................................224
Reading Classroom Management as a Gendered Issue.............................................228
Reading Classroom Management as Teacher Success.............................................230
Conclusion: Creating an Un-Natural Discourse Surrounding Teaching and Classroom Management......................................................................................................................236

CHAPTER TEN
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION POLICY
Introduction.....................................................................................................................240
An Overview of Results:
The Role of the Teacher Education Program in Addressing Inner City Schooling in Canada.................................................................241
Interwoven Ideologies about Inner City Schooling.....................................................246
Participant Reliance on Deficit Frameworks of Inner City Communities......................249
Participant Use of Hegemonic and Counter Hegemonic Narratives............................250
Research as Transformation.........................................................................................251
The Spatial Mappings of Inner City Schools in Canada.............................................252
Race, Gender, and the Inner City School......................................................................253
Critical Knowledge: A Marginal Pedagogy.................................................................255
TDSB’s Model Schools for Inner Cities Initiative.........................................................258
Reconceptualizing the Term Inner City for a Canadian Context.................................259
Linking Teacher Education Accreditation in Ontario to Critical Pedagogy....................261
Requirements for Program Accreditation: Ontario......................................................262
Recommendations to Teacher Education Programs....................................................265
Recommendations to the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Ministry of Education................................................................................................................267
Recommendations to Ontario Boards of Education.....................................................267

REFERENCES.................................................................................................................269

APPENDICES
Appendix A: Class Script for Recruiting Teacher Candidates......................................286
Appendix B: Poster & List-Serve Advertisement.........................................................287
Appendix C: Email to Course Instructors.................................................................................288
Appendix D: Individual Interview Schedule ..............................................................................289
Appendix E: Letter of Consent for Teacher Candidates..........................................................291
Appendix F: Letter of Information for Teacher Candidates....................................................293
Appendix G: Focus Group One Schedule ..................................................................................295
Appendix H: Focus Group Two Schedule ................................................................................296
Appendix I: Instructions for Focus Group Three: Media Analysis of Freedom Writers ..........297
Appendix J: Campus Resources for Participants .....................................................................296
Chapter One

The Loudest Silence:
Teachers and the Inner City in Canada

Introduction

In February 2008, I was invited to be a guest lecturer for a course on social justice at a teacher education program (TEP) located in southwestern Ontario, Canada. As a new doctoral student in the same program, I jumped at the opportunity to speak in front of a large pre-service teacher audience. The lecture was entitled *Reconceptualizing inner city schooling: One teacher's perspective* (Jack-Davies, 2007a). I intentionally used the term reconceptualizing in the title. I intended to share with the audience that my teaching in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community, a low-income community in the city’s north end, changed my view of education in Canada. My teaching in this “inner city” community forced me to reconsider, rethink, and reframe my own biases about teaching in such a context.

During the lecture, I invited the pre-service teachers to name popular films and television shows that depicted inner city schools. Banks and Esposito (2002), arguing from a cultural studies perspective, explained that media representations both create and reflect our culture. Such representations also help viewers to “make meaning of their lives and those of others based on the representations” (p. 236). The researchers emphasized that representation in film and television provides viewers with “access into worlds other than their own while attempting to protect the ideological world of the viewer they most want to attract” (p. 236). I used film and television as a discussion starting point because media often works as a vehicle through which students are able to share their thoughts about difficult topics in a manner that is accessible to them (hooks in Jhally, 1997).
The pre-service teachers recalled the television show *Boston Public* (Kelly, 2000) and a host of films including: *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995), *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007), *Lean on Me* (Avildsen, 1989), *Take the Lead* (Friedlander, 2006), and *Bring it On* (Reed, 2000). We then discussed common themes portrayed in these films (Trier, 2005). Some pre-service teachers identified themes based on race and social class where Blackness and Whiteness are constructed often in specific and stereotypical ways. Others discussed a tendency for White students in these films to teach the Black students, but never for Black students to teach the White ones. After delivering the lecture about pedagogy and student learning, I asked the pre-service teachers to indicate, by a show of hands, their intention to teach at a Canadian inner city school. Surprisingly, only five students of an assembly of over 300 indicated interest. I proceeded toward the end of the lecture. The thunderous applause by the audience signalled to me that my time with them was over. However, long after I walked away from the auditorium that day, I kept thinking back to that pivotal moment that formed the basis for this research.

**Problematic**

Inner city and urban schools are often sites of complex social issues that converge into a small geographic space (Daniel, 2007). These spaces are often, but not always, marked by racial difference, poverty, and immigration (Kincheloe, 2004). Writing about urban schooling in the United States, Kincheloe (2004) suggested that such schools often have a “higher rate of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity” than suburban schools (p. 6). He explained that in some urban districts:

Nearly two-thirds of urban students do not fit the categories of White or middle class, and within these populations, high percentages of students receive free or reduced-priced lunches. Achievement rates for poor and minority students consistently fall below those of White and higher-socioeconomic-class students.
Surveys of teachers and staff in these highly diverse and poor urban schools consistently indicate that they often feel overwhelmed by the problems that undermine lower-socioeconomic-class minority students’ quest to succeed in school. The frustration of such teachers and staff members is exacerbated by the perception that few care about the well-being and the success of these students. (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 6)

Kincheloe’s (2004) assertion that teachers in urban and inner city schools are overwhelmed by the task of educating low-income and minority students speaks to the sense in which teaching in this context may pose additional challenges for teachers (Groulx, 2001; Weiner, 1993), especially those who are new to the teaching profession.

The conservative paradigm of teacher education in the province of Ontario means that teacher education programs (TEPS), called Faculties of Education in Ontario, often fail to problematize those very issues that confront inner city teachers (Levine-Rasky, 1998; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Some programs might offer critical issues that inform public schooling, such as immigration, poverty, and social inequality, as elective courses; pre-service teachers can opt out if they choose (Lund, 1998; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001). Elective courses are those that have not yet achieved the status of authoritative knowledge (Britzman, 1991). The tendency for education programs to offer critical courses that examine issues of race and social class, for example, as electives, means that a select few teachers seek out this knowledge. A lack of theoretical grounding in critical theory means that all teachers graduating from TEPs may not be aware of the factors that affect the unequal education outcomes for marginalized students in schools.

Currently, the province of Ontario has 13 TEPs. Of this total, three specifically address inner city schooling: the Centre for Urban Schooling (CUS) at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/U of T, 2009), York University (2009), and the University of Windsor (2009). However, these programs represent the minority and their equity-based teacher education orientations do not reflect what is typical
across the province as a whole. I argue in this dissertation that the failure of TEPs to offer critical pedagogy as a mandatory aspect of each of the 13 programs of education contributes to the unequal experiences and education outcomes of marginalized students in the province.

Recent education policies by the Conservative government of Ontario have further undermined equity efforts in education (Carr, 2008; Solomon et al., 2005). These education reforms reflect a neo-conservative orientation that tends to privilege a focus on standards, accountability, expectations, and measurable results at the expense of education aimed at addressing the needs of marginalized students (Carr, 2008, p. 14; Dei, 2003). According to Carr (2008), beginning in 1995, under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, the Conservative government ceased plans for the development of curriculum initiatives that focused on equity. Such initiatives included an antiracist document on Aboriginal education, a resource for teachers, and a resource on hate crimes for use by school administrators. In the same vein, Solomon et al. (2005) emphasized that the current educational climate in the province is one that marginalizes equity issues:

Ontario, Canada has feverishly returned to its conservative educational moorings, notions of equity, diversity and anti-racism practices have been largely marginalized as important sites for consideration within educational spheres. (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 149)

This mood of conservatism has far-reaching implications for the extent to which issues such inner city and urban schooling in Canada are included in TEPs across the province. It also impacts the extent to which TEPs deem critical discourse official knowledge (Apple, 1993) or knowledge that all pre-service teachers must know.

Giroux (1997b) argued that, instead of directly addressing critical issues in schooling, TEPs tend to focus on a technical, rational orientation that privileges regulation, standardization, and certification of teachers at the expense of creating “public intellectuals educating students for responsible, critical citizenship” (p. 232). Britzman (1991) referred to
this knowledge as authoritative knowledge and emphasized that its authority lies on the belief that “education must return to the ‘the great books’ of the academic canon” (p. 21). Authoritative knowledge negates the influence of the Civil Rights movement, which calls for an inclusive curriculum. She writes that TEPs have historically focused on assimilating cultural differences instead of “treating students as bearers of diverse social memories with a right to speak and represent themselves” (p. 232). Elsewhere Giroux (1981) shared that the purpose of teacher education is actually political in nature, with its form and content directly linked to power, culture, ideology, and hegemony (p. 147).

No issue better illustrated the unequal outcome of schooling experiences for marginalized students in Ontario than the recent debate surrounding the opening of Canada’s first Afrocentric school. Outcries from Toronto’s Black community for the creation of the school created an explosion of media and community discourse about the need for culturally relevant schooling and the responsibility of Ontario’s provincial government to provide it. In Canada, because provincial governments have jurisdiction over education, no national policy governs pre-school to post-secondary levels of education.

The first Afrocentric school opened on September, 8, 2009 (Brown, 2009). Prior to its opening, Canadians fiercely debated whether a school should specifically address the needs of Black students at the expense of others. Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) cited research that discusses the unequal education experiences of racial and ethnic groups in Canadian schools. They revealed data from the former Toronto Board of Education (TBE), now the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), which indicates that one in every 33 Asian students, compared to one in ten White students, and one in five Black students was enrolled in the Basic (or vocational) tract in Toronto area high schools. Students enrolled in the vocational tract unprepared to apply to university. The researchers indicated further that 86%
of Black high school students were labelled “at risk,” based on their performance in English and Mathematics courses (p. 5). A 2004 report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) entitled *The Safe and Compassionate Schools Task Force*, which discusses the impact of zero tolerance policies on students, revealed that Black, Latino, and Tamil students are disproportionately affected by disciplinary school practices:

Specifically, there is a perception that students from certain racial groups, particularly Black, Tamil, Aboriginal and Latino students, are treated more harshly than other students in the application of discipline for the same offence. There is also some suggestion that a discriminatory effect on Black students may be the result of suspensions for more “subjective” offences, such as being disrespectful or questioning authority, where there is greater leeway for racial stereotyping and bias to enter into the decision-making process. (OHRC, 2004, p. 6)

The report also reveals that systemic factors were at play in the streaming of Black students into Special Education courses and in their high dropout rates from Ontario schools.

A TDSB (2008) report on urban student achievement revealed that fewer than 50% of grade seven and eight students from the Caribbean and East Africa are able to perform reading, writing, and arithmetic at the Ontario provincial standard. Dei (2006) argued that an Afrocentric school is necessary because of the inability of Ontario’s public school system to address the learning needs of diverse students:

Calls for a “revisioned schooling” in the form of an African-centred/Black-focused school have recently re-emerged from the deep frustration many members of the Black/African-Canadian community in Ontario feel about the inability of the current public school system to effectively educate students from diverse backgrounds. (Dei, 2006, p. 27)

A lack of equity-based curriculum that recognizes the histories, contributions, and experiences of Black students was cited as one of the factors responsible for their high dropout rates. In the United States, Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that culturally relevant schooling enables African American students to strive for excellence, while at the same time, recognizes and honours their cultures. As early as 1994, the *Royal Commission on Learning* by
the Ontario Ministry of Education cited a race relations report that identified a growing concern about Black student performance in schools. At that time, it identified teacher education as one area requiring attention:

Virtually every facet of Ontario’s education system needs to be examined critically, if it is to be made more responsive to the needs of those who fall outside the mainstream. Teacher training and recruitment, curriculum revision, employment equity, anti-racism education: all these must be the subject of close scrutiny. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 431)

Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Zine (1997) have long charged that Black students do not simply drop out of Ontario schools, but are actively pushed out of the education system due to systemic issues that contribute to their disengagement from schools.

However, one of the most telling features of the Afrocentric school debate was the silence about the role that TEPs play in the education of teachers and the impact of this education on the manner in which low-income and minority students experience schools. This silence worked to suggest that there is no relationship between how students experience schooling and the ways in which teachers are educated. Britzman (1991) asserted that the tendency of teacher education to focus on teaching as something that happens on the job, as opposed to a focus on theory in teacher education, contributes to the idea that theory is secondary to experience. Such an ideology undermines the role and importance of education theory in teacher education courses.

Amidst arguments for and against the opening of the school, discourse surrounding teachers and teacher education was articulated rarely, if at all, in popular debates and in media programs where the debates often played out. This discursively implies that teacher education is beyond reproach, is a-political, and is not connected to how schooling is actually experienced by students.
Research Question

This dissertation critically examines how seven new teachers make meaning about teaching in a Canadian inner city schooling context. A number of questions informed this study:

- What role do issues of race play in the possibility of their teaching at an inner city school?
- What is the relationship between their understandings of teaching at such schools and their own racial identities?
- What meaning do they attach to the term “inner city” in Canada and the city or province where they live?
- What are their conceptions of inner city schools, students, parents, and teachers?
- What pedagogical approaches might they apply in inner city classrooms if they are hired to teach in such schools?
- What role did the TEP from which they graduated play in their understanding of inner city schooling?

In 1980, McLaren’s influential book *Cries from the Corridor* chronicled his time spent teaching in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community. The community, named for two main intersecting streets, receives a large influx of immigrants each year (James & Haig-Brown, 2001). McLaren’s (1980) text sparked much heated debate concerning whether inner city schools actually exist here in Canada, and not in the United States (Lewis, 2009, in conversation). In an article written for *The Toronto Star*, Contenta (1989) described the extent to which McLaren’s work hit a nerve with Canadians:
News reports at the time accused [Peter McLaren] of relating stories “almost beyond imagination” and questioned McLaren’s contention that Metro’s [Toronto’s] pristine suburbs had “inner city” schools. It’s as though there was something unCanadian in suggesting that a Metro suburb was wracked with the same social and economic ills that had crippled American ghettos. (Contenta, 1989)

Contenta’s quote is telling. First, he described McLaren’s words as “beyond imagination.” I suggest that Contenta’s use of the term “unCanadian,” in relation to the existence of Canadian inner city schools, works to displace such schooling onto the U.S. “ghetto.” In Contenta’s words, inner city schooling is a social ill that must be placed elsewhere; anywhere but to Canada’s “pristine suburbs.”

Thirty-one years later, my research departs from McLaren’s work by analyzing inner city schooling through the lens of teacher education. This study problematizes inner city and urban schooling as a uniquely Canadian construct. It examines geographies of schooling in relation to how these new teachers understand the inner city and urban school. The study uses a critical approach that suggests that issues of race, and their intersections with gender, social class, and other identity markers, inform schooling at all levels.

In addition to the conservative paradigm of teacher education, with its focus on a technical rationality (Giroux, 1981) that often deems critical knowledge to be superfluous knowledge, inner city schooling as an education issue has often been associated with the United States, creating a silence around inner city schooling as an ongoing Canadian issue. Research shows that pre-service teachers are predominantly White, from middle-class backgrounds, with few cross-cultural experiences (Sleeter, 2001; Solomon et al., 2005). I do not seek to essentialize Whiteness here, nor do I suggest that White teachers are incapable of teaching low-income and minority students. However, research shows that pre-service teachers tend to be reluctant to teach in inner city schools, citing concerns about security and safety (Easter, Shultz, Neyhard, & Beck, 1999; Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008), drugs and
crime (Hampton et al., 2008; Trier, 2005), and discomfort teaching students of a different cultural background (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Picower, 2009).

Groulx (2001) found that participants in her study often wished to defer teaching in low income and minority schools until they had gained more teaching experience. It is important to mention that much of what the research literature reports, with respect to the beliefs and experiences of pre-service teachers, privileges the views and experiences of White pre-service teachers (James, 2010; Montecinos, 2004). As a result, racialized pre-service teachers are rarely made the subjects of research inquiry. Therefore, their beliefs and experiences may be different from or similar to those reported by the research literature. This missing link impacts how I speak about pre-service teachers as a whole, with the knowledge that the literature may not speak to the variability within pre-service teachers as a group.

According to James-Wilson (2007), two themes can be found in the literature on urban education. The first theme examines crisis, which is associated with “failing students, schools, and communities” (p. 24). The second theme is associated with improvement, which focuses on effective school leadership, intervention programs, school reform, and urban coalitions. The literature finds that pre-service teachers often hold problematic attitudes toward low-income and minority students. A deficit ideology is often used to construct marginalized students as hailing from problematic homes and communities (Groulx, 2001; McIntyre, 1997; Picower, 2009; Weiner, 2003) and as having behavioural problems in schools (Groulx, 2001; Milner & Tenore, 2010). Such a framework works to suggest that low income and minority students lack motivation to learn and are unable to succeed in schools.

Weiner (1993) explained that, in the 1960s, definitions of urban and inner city students that used theories of intellectual and cultural deficiency meant that teachers needed
to be made aware of the deficits of such students. However, the deficits also often referred to the students’ families as well as to their social class status. These ideologies suggested that low income parents “do an inadequate job of teaching their children the abilities and motives needed to cope with schooling” (p. 15). Other theorists identified the “problem” of educating inner city students as involving a conflict between the culture of schools and the “culture” of low-income students (p. 15). This culture meant that teachers needed to ensure that they were “capable of establishing unvarying routines in class, with clear, enforced rules” (p. 15). I argue that such hegemonic portraits of inner city students impact teacher pedagogy and expectations surrounding the achievement of low-income and minority student achievement (James, 2004).

I approach the research question from the axis of “race,” with the understanding that issues of race interlock (Collins, 2000) and intersect (Crenshaw, 1991) with other identity positions such as gender, social class, and sexual orientation. I encase my first usage of the term race in quotation marks to indicate my understanding of its contested and shifting tendencies. In this dissertation, I employ race in its broadest sense to incorporate racial identity, the process of racialization, racial discourse, and racism.

According to Levin, Gaskell and Pollock (2007), in 2006, 67% of secondary students and 69% of grade seven and eight students in the TDSB were racialized. This is compared to a teaching workforce that fails to reflect this diversity. A recent survey of the Canadian workplace conducted by the WALL (Work and Lifelong Learning) network describes Canada’s teaching profession as stable, female dominant, and culturally homogeneous, with teachers “more likely to be female (75%) and White (95%) than most other occupational groups” in Canada (Livingston & Antonelli, 2007, p. 36). Ryan, Pollock and Antonelli (2009) indicated that in Canada, “there are proportionally many more students of colour than there
are educators of colour” (p. 599). They argue, that “despite the increase of the proportion of ‘visible minority’ teachers in the general teacher population, the proportion of racialized teachers in the teacher workforce declined between 2001 and 2006” (p. 597). The disparity between the cultural makeup of teachers and the increasing diversity in schools is cited as a cause for concern by researchers (Dei & James, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Solomon et al., 2005) given the lack of cross-cultural experiences that pre-service teachers often bring to their teaching.

**Rationale and Significance of the Study**

Issues surrounding inner city and urban schooling in Canada are increasingly becoming difficult to ignore. The manner in which pre-service teachers are educated for working in low income and minority schools plays a key role in their understanding of the pedagogical needs of such students. Currently, few studies exist that examine how pre-service teachers make meaning out of teaching in a uniquely Canadian inner city context. Much knowledge about inner city schooling privileges the U.S. educational context. By emphasizing inner city schooling as a Canadian construct, this study emphasizes the Canadian geographic landscape and the manner in which it informs the education of students and pre-service teachers.

Collins and Coleman (2008) theorized that schools often reflect “broader social characteristics of their neighbourhoods” even as they play a role in shaping them (p. 281). Schools can be conceived of as distinct geographical spaces. As a function of the inner city, the inner city school is problematized as a particular geographical space complete with its own spatial meanings. Maynes (2001) wrote that students living in poverty usually are not well served by schooling. Such students tend to perform below their middle-class
counterparts who enter schools with the cultural capital that often ensures their success (Dei, James, Karumanchery, Wilson & Zine, 2000; Delpit, 1988; Reay, 2004):

To date, most Canadian children living in poverty have not been particularly well served by schooling...collectively these children do less well in school than their non-poor counterparts. In grade school, they score substantially lower on standardized testing and are far more likely to be identified as “special needs” students....They are also more than twice as likely to drop out of school...and up to four times less likely to access post-secondary education. (Maynes, 2001, p. 270)

However, in spite of this evidence, Weiner (2002) asserted that there is a scarcity of data providing increased understanding about teaching in inner city schools:

Urban teacher education suffers from both a scarcity of firm data and a lack of sustained, serious intellectual scrutiny. Reliable statistics on urban schools and urban teaching, on problems as basic as retention rates among new urban teachers, let alone identification of the reasons for their leaving, are elusive. (Weiner 2002, p. 254)

She explained that an examination of the social conditions surrounding inner city schooling is often neglected. This neglect impacts the generation of theory concerning urban teacher education. Weiner (1993) emphasized that, in order for theory on urban teacher education to have meaning, it is “essential to recognize the social contexts of urban schooling” (p. 254).

By making problematic issues of race, gender, and place, this study seeks to contribute to new understandings of pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city schooling.

I employ Britzman’s (1991) definition of a problematic as “a conceptual structure that can be identified both by the questions it raises and the questions it is incapable of raising” (p. 17). For Britzman, a problematic in education studies the “discourses and discursive practices in such as way as to reveal its commissions and omissions” (p. 17). According to Lund (1998), that teacher education is often left out of debates surrounding anti-racism and educational equity in Canadian schools, must be made a cause for concern:

Faculties of education have contributed little to this [anti-racist] struggle and have received little attention in the multicultural or anti-racist education literature in Canada. While some faculty members have taken part in the critique of school
practices...our own worksites and practices have been virtually ignored and left beyond critique. (Lund, 1998, p. 45)

By approaching this research question through the experiences and conceptions of new teachers, I hope to contribute to the academic debate on the role of TEPs in educating pre-service teachers for schools that are marked not only by racial and social-class diversity but also by increased immigration (James & Saul, 2007; TDSB, 2010).

This study seeks to add to a growing body of research that examines aspects of schooling relating to low income and minority students in Canada (Dippo, Duran, Gilbert & Pitt, 2009; Hesch, 1999; James, 2004; James & Saul, 2007; Solomon & Sekayi, 2007), and more specifically, on the perceptions and experiences of pre-service teachers learning to teach in inner city schools (Stewart Rose, 2008). It seeks to contribute to the field of geographies of schooling, a relatively new field of study, by examining the inner city school as a particular place.

Results of this study will contribute to new understandings of issues of race, gender, and place when it involves the teaching of low income and minority students. It will also contribute to curricular and pedagogical approaches pertaining to equitable and inclusive teacher education. The study will raise questions for consideration by TEPs in the province of Ontario and beyond. Results of this research will also contribute to the creation and/or amendment of Ontario teacher education policy, with a specific emphasis on equity provisions that govern how teacher education programs become accredited. It will also be instrumental in assisting in the development of school board policy on the hiring of new teachers and the professional development of existing teachers in schools that serve low income and minority students.

The remainder of this chapter outlines definitions for terms used in the study. It discusses my role as the researcher and my motivations for conducting this study. In the
section on multiculturalism, I discuss Canada’s official multicultural policy and its relationship to issues of race. This multicultural ideal is a Canadian cultural story that often renders issues of race unnecessary, given the multicultural focus on culture. The chapter explores the conservative paradigm of teacher education and its negation of critical issues such as race, gender, and social class. It juxtaposes this mood of conservatism with the experiences of marginalized students in Ontario schools. The juxtaposition of these two areas is meant to illustrate the gap that exists between what teachers learn and the impact of that learning, or lack thereof, on students. I conclude this chapter with an overview of each subsequent chapter.

**Definition of Terms**

Fanon (1967) in *Black Skin White Masks* wrote that the mastering of language affords one tremendous power. He explained that the colonized people of a country often find themselves “face to face with the language of the civilizing nation” (p. 18) which speaks to the fact that the language that is available to an individual, at any given place in time, is always partial and may never fully capture the intent of the speaker. As a researcher, I must work within the confines of a language that is not my own, and perhaps, was never intended for my usage. Therefore, I write with the understanding that there are instances where I might never be able to communicate effectively using words. Writing from a feminist perspective, Lewis (1993) asserted that discourse often serves to privilege phallocentric interests (p. 14). The same can be said of discourse concerning race. The discourse available to me privileges dominant group interests. In this section, I outline definitions for various terms used in this study. By defining each term, I intend to communicate the context in
which the term is being used, with the understanding that multiple and even contradictory uses of each term are possible.

**Race** is defined as an “ideological or social construction produced with historical and geopolitical specificity” (McLaren, 2003, p. 260). It must be understood as a discursive term (Hall, 1997; Yon, 2000) that has political consequences in everyday social relations. I use the terms Black and White, each with a capital letter, when speaking of peoples of African and European descent. I recognize the tensions inherent in using these two terms since they fail to capture accurately the diversity and complexity of each group’s location within the wider culture.

In analyzing the stories of each research participant, I often use the term **narrative**. In this study, narrative refers to the specific tellings that each participant relayed through their experiences and rememberings. Through the sharing of their stories, the teachers in this study provided me with a tiny glimpse into their lives, such that they might never be able to retell in the same way. James (2010) wrote that the “stories are not about truths, but about how participants understand and relate their lives to us” (p. 55). The stories that each participant shared reflected the truth as each lived it. Chase (2003), writing of the role of narrative in interview research, argued that, although researchers may disagree about what constitutes narrative, they all share the common assertion that narrative forms are interested in making sense of experiences and in “constructing and communicating meaning” (p. 273). Similarly, Richardson (1997) explained that narrative reflects human actions. It is through narrative that human beings “organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes” (p. 27).

As with the term race, I encased my first usage of the term **inner city** in quotation marks to indicate that this term must be critically analyzed for meaning. Like the term urban,
the term inner city is a contested one that often depends on the demographics of particular places, which change over time (Dippo et al., 2009). I describe inner city areas as those with “a high concentration of poverty and few or no signs of prosperity in terms of property, commerce, and human resources” (James-Wilson, 2007, p. 18). Inner city schools are defined as schools with high proportions of impoverished students (TDSB, 2005). The term is borrowed from the TDSB, Canada’s largest and most ethnically diverse board, which serves over 250,000 students annually (Levin et al. 2007; TDSB, 2011). The term inner city, then, can be understood also as a social construct that is dependent upon time, place, and context. Defining the inner city school in this way means that schools located in rural areas, small cities, outer suburban, and inner suburban areas (James & Saul, 2007) fall under this definition. I employ the term with the understanding that its meaning is not fixed. The term inner city is one that is problematic for the ways in which it implicates certain bodies in particular places. Due to the value laden nature of the term and the fact that an inner city school is open to definition and interpretation, I will use variations on the phrase “schools that serve low-income and minority students” when referring to inner city schools.

Researchers have argued that the term urban must be reconceptualised for meaning (Bondi & Peake, 1988; Daniel, 2010; James, 2004) especially within a Canadian context where strict suburban/urban divides rarely fall along simplistic geographic lines. I use James-Wilson’s (2007) definition of urban as “communities that are located in metropolitan areas where there is evidence of both affluence and poverty” (p. 18). In the research literature, some researchers use the term urban schools when speaking of schools with large numbers of students living in poverty. Other researchers use the term inner city schools to refer to the same issue. In speaking of the interaction between space and schooling, James (2004) wrote that urban space is not simply “physical, contextual or geographic, but is a social construct
based on a system of ideas, distinctions and divisions which ‘provide a way to think, speak, see, feel, and act toward’...students” (p. 16). This speaks to the extent to which the naming of spaces and places is socially constructed (James, 2004). It also speaks to the ways in which notions of place, race, and social class become intertwined in certain geographic areas that are marked by difference (Daniel, 2010; Kazemipur & Halli, 1997; Kern, 2005). Galabuzi (2006) explained that there is a “growing tendency in urban Canada toward residential segregation that is reinforced by the low-income status of many racialized groups” (p. 189).

McLaren (2003) defined social class as “the economic, social and political relationships that govern life in a given social order” (p. 198). Reay and Lucey (2003) wrote that social class is dependent upon “fixing and holding some people in space so that others can move” (p. 126). As a construct, social class is complex. It is one that is discussed rarely in the field of education in Canada (hooks, 1994; Lewis, in conversation). As a construct, its definition involves more than an individual’s income level, as illustrated by McLeod and Yates (2008), who described social class as relating to issues of power and identity:

Attention to social distinction, hierarchy, power embodied in individual identities and in the patterns of social relationships between individuals, as well as patterns of work, including the form of paid and unpaid work, the structure of what types of jobs people from different backgrounds enter, and the dispositions, capital, power, and lack of capital and power that pertain to different kinds of jobs. (McLeod & Yates, 2008, p. 348)

With respect to the term low income, this research refers to groups or individuals who live below the low-income cut-off (LICO) as determined by Statistics Canada (Galabuzi, 2006). According to Statistics Canada (2010), the LICO is “an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income to the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than an average family would.” The low-income cut-off in Canada is $21,359.00

In several areas of this study, I describe critical forms of education as those that involve attention to issues of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and so on.
According to McLaren (2003) critical theory enables educators to see schools as not only sites of socialization and indoctrination, but also as “a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation” (p.194). As such, schools become spaces where both domination and liberation are possible. For the critical educator, schooling involves raced, classed, and gendered interests. As opposed to educators who emphasize what Giroux (1981) called technical-rational knowledge, critical forms of education are interested in knowledge that can transform an individual’s existing social location. McLaren (2003) emphasized further that “emancipator knowledge helps us understand how social relations are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege” (p. 197).

**Employing a Black Feminist Standpoint**

I was introduced to feminism as a Master’s student enrolled in a feminist theories course at a Canadian university. My introduction to patriarchy and the gendered nature of oppression changed my way of looking at and being in the world. While at first I found feminist theory unsettling, with time, I was unable to see the world in anything but gendered terms. Part of my struggle with feminism surrounded questions of race. I was often dissatisfied with mainstream feminism’s response to issues of race and issues that plague women of colour. Lorde (1984) and hooks (1984) have long theorized about the need for mainstream feminism to come to terms with issues of race. Today, mainstream feminism continues to struggle in this area as the politics of “who can speak for whom” is as relevant now as it was in Lorde’s time.

With respect to the applicability of a Black feminist perspective that is rooted in the African American experience for this research, Collins (2000) emphasized that a Black
feminist standpoint extends beyond the borders of the United States to incorporate the experiences of women of African descent globally:

U.S. Black women must continue to struggle for our empowerment, but at the same time, we must recognize that U.S. Black feminism participates in a larger context of struggle for social justice that transcends U.S. borders. In particular, U.S. Black feminism should see commonalities that join women of African descent as well as differences that emerge from our diverse national histories. (Collins, 2000, p. xi)

Collins (2003) suggested that “much of the best of Black feminist thought reflects this effort to find a collective, self-defined voice and express a fully articulated womanist standpoint” (p. 100). Despite my reservation about whether the experiences of African American women could speak to my experiences as a Black woman in Canada, this perspective most accurately captures my experiences as a researcher in the academy.

As an epistemology, a Black feminist framework reflects the experiences of Black women, even though intersecting issues of social class, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity create differences among Black women. Collins (2000) defined a Black feminist standpoint as subjugated knowledge. One epistemological emphasis of a Black feminist standpoint is the recognition that the researcher is not simply detached and distant from research, but is attached to and embedded within a wider community of Black women. She explained that for Black women, knowledge gained through the intersections of issues of race, gender, and social class “provides the stimulus for crafting and passing on the subjugated knowledge of Black women’s critical social theory” (p. 8).

As a historically marginalized group both inside and outside the academy, Black women have “produced social thought designed to oppose oppression” (p. 9). Theory making by Black women diverges from dominant academic theories and is often committed to issues of social justice. Because dominant male interests inform which types of knowledge become validated, and because such interests “pervade the thematic content of traditional
a Black feminist standpoint aims to provide knowing that is often situated at the margins, both with respect to race and gender (Collins, 2003, p. 47). Concerned with matters of truth and knowledge, another epistemological concern of a Black feminist framework is the question of “what constitutes adequate justifications that a given knowledge claim, such as fact or theory, is true” (p. 49).

Wane, Deliovsky, and Lawson (2002) suggested that Black feminism in Canada is multilayered and fuses African, African American, and White feminist perspectives. It draws on the work of African American theorists, activists, and feminists and emphasizes that there is no singular Black Canadian identity. Writing from a Black Canadian feminist perspective, Massaquoi (2007) explained that Black feminism in Canada requires that attention should not only be paid to “how Black gendered bodies negotiate their identities and politics,” but must also focus on the African diaspora in Canada (p. 81). On the other hand, Amoah (2007) warned of the difficulty in articulating a uniquely Black Canadian feminism, since, as a theory, it relies heavily on African American feminist scholarship as its foundation. A uniquely Black Canadian feminist perspective remains in its infancy because such scholarship has not been sustained conceptually over time (Lewis, in conversation). That said, Amoah (2007) suggested that reliance on a U.S. based Black feminism for theoretical grounding does not preclude the development of a uniquely Black Canadian feminist identity.

Before choosing to write using this framework, I examined the underpinnings of several theoretical paradigms for their relevance to this study, including mainstream feminism, critical theory, post structuralism, phenomenology, and postcolonial theory. A Black feminist standpoint, which recognizes my experiences as a Black woman in the academy, most authentically speaks to my role as researcher. Yet, I recognize the value in each of the above-mentioned perspectives. In using a Black feminist perspective that is
situated in Canada, I accept its limitations for this study. However, I cite Richardson (2001) who argued that no one paradigm is the arbiter of truth:

The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural and political struggles. (Richardson, 2001, p. 35)

At best, my use of this perspective is an attempt to conduct this research project through an epistemological lens that enables me to make meaning, while paying attention to research as a transformative practice, as a critical social practice, and one that pays attention to the role of issues of race and gender, among other identity positions.

**Reflections on Canada’s Multicultural Identity and its Relationship to Schooling**

In *A Fair Country*, Saul (2008) proclaimed that Canada is a Métis nation that continues to grapple with its identity. As a result, the question of what constitutes a true Canadian identity continues to haunt Canadians. Canada struggles with philosophical questions surrounding what it means to be Canadian because critical questions about Canada’s identity are yet to be asked. Saul (2008) suggested that Canada’s self-concept fails to map squarely map onto Canada’s history. He theorizes that who Canada is, and how Canadians understand themselves, are linked to ties with First Nations/Aboriginal people. Yet, he insisted, Canada constructs its past as one that has more European allegiances, despite its reliance on First Nations/Aboriginal peoples for its early development.

Canada’s national stories are those stories that shape how Canadians think about themselves, even when these stories fail to represent the collective stories of a people divided by region, language, ethnic origin, immigrant status, race, and citizenship. Walcott (2000) wrote that Canadian identity must be conceived of as more than the English-French problem, multiculturalism, or the vertical mosaic. This identity must include the colonization
and settlement of the new world, the defeat of the French, and the colonization of Aboriginal/First Nations peoples (p. 97). In this respect, Canada’s history is one that has always been inextricably linked to issues of race.

The *Canadian Multicultural Act* (henceforth the *Act*) stipulates that Canadians are free to preserve their multicultural heritage and diversity regardless of race, national/ethnic origin, colour, and religion (James & Schecter, 2000). In 1988, the *Act* was adopted by the Canadian Parliament. Aims of the *Act* included the preservation of language and culture and the reduction of discrimination. As a policy, multiculturalism has become a key facet of Canadian identity (James & Schecter, 2000). Canada’s official multicultural plays a key role in every day experiences of Canadians (Walcott, 2000, p.42). This policy is situated within a revised version of the Canadian constitution, namely the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (James & Schecter, 2000; Lund, 1998). Other aims of the *Act* include increasing cultural awareness and promoting cultural sensitivity at the federal level (Library of Parliament, 2006, p.6). However, the policy’s privileging of the dual cultures of the English and the French casts other cultural and racialized groups as Other:

Indeed, the referential values of the terms “cultural groups” and “other Canadians” do not appear to include those Canadian of Anglo and Celtic origin. Within these terms of debate, as it were, culture is understood to be located in and displayed by people who are from somewhere foreign and whose primary language is neither English nor French. (James & Schecter, 2000, p. 29)

It is this casting as Other that informs the experiences of marginalized students in schools. Such students are cast as Other in relation to a Canadian norm that is deeply rooted in notions of race.

With respect to education, starting in the 1970s and continuing until the early 1980s, multiculturalism as a policy was implemented in school board programs that sought to “foster sensitivity to and respect for ethno-cultural differences,” and to “promote the
integration of minority students within the dominant educational framework” (James & Schecter, 2000, p. 29). However, as a policy, multiculturalism has been criticized for failing to reduce economic inequities experienced by racialized minorities. It has also been charged with, “co-opting ethnic minorities into certain occupational structure and residential arrangements” which leads to a preservation of the status quo. Finally, multiculturalism has been critiqued for its celebratory approach to culture (often referred to “saris, samosas, and steel drums” or “food and festivals”) at the expense of providing “collective rights or socio-economic enhancement” for minority groups (Elliott & Fleras, 1992, p. 289).

James (2004) explained that critical educators have long criticized multicultural education for producing and reproducing difference. Anti-racism, with its identification that differences based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and so on, differently impact the learning outcomes of students, is seen “as a paradigm which stands as a counteractive measure” (p. 18). Lewis (1993) theorized that the concepts of equality and diversity have a long history within a North American context. She explained that these terms have “specific schooling outcomes” (p. 187). However, the discourse of education suggests a “commitment to the democratic principles of equality,” within a context where the dominant practices that work to marginalize difference often go unexamined:

At the same time, we cling to notions of Canada as a population marked by cultural, social, economic, and gender diversity. The metaphors through which we choose to describe ourselves in the schooling curriculum, whether of the “mosaic” or the “melting pot,” celebrate identifiable difference even as we leave unexamined those practices and schooling forms which reinforce the difference that makes a difference. (Lewis, 1993, p. 187)

Today, education critics argue that mainstream education in Ontario schools fails to meet the needs of racialized students (Dei et al., 1997). Student alienation is evident in areas such as the formal curriculum, teaching methods and materials, and student assessment (Dei, 1996; James & Schecter, 2000, p. 31).
Britzman (1991) asserted that cultural myths “offer a set of ideal images, definitions, and justifications that are taken up as measures for thought, affect and practice” (p. 6). Canada’s cultural myths are those stories that shape how Canadians think about themselves and include multiculturalism. I discuss multiculturalism as a policy to demonstrate that for some Canadians, multiculturalism fosters a celebration of various cultures living in pluralistic harmony. To speak of race, in the form of antiracist education, is considered an affront to multicultural values. An early study by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996; 2003) revealed that in-service and pre-service teachers were resistant to antiracist discourse, which they considered divisive because of its focus on race. They considered antiracism, with its focus on race, as oppose to culture, to be divisive. This is one of the ways in which multiculturalism is used to discursively negate the role that issues of race play in the unequal education experiences of students (Dei, 2007). As a policy, it is often used to silence issues of race, even as it admits that Canada is a pluralistic nation. As a policy that has meaning in the daily lives of Canadians, it works to stifle any discourse that suggests that all members of Canada’s cultural mosaic are positioned unequally, with respect to the social, the political, the economic, and the cultural.

Limitations

This dissertation seeks to examine how seven new teachers make meaning out of teaching in a Canadian inner city context. Research participants were selected from one TEP in the province of Ontario. My decision to conduct interviews with new teachers from one program instead of several programs across the province can be regarded as a limitation since it privileges one site at the expense of others. This privileging highlights nuances that are particular to this program in relation to other programs. The selected program was
considered a case in point (Lewis in conversation). As a case in point, I was less interested in making generalizations about all TEPs. Instead, I was more interested in gaining in-depth knowledge about how these seven teachers viewed inner city schooling given their teacher education experience at the selected program.

A second limitation of this study is the fact that the program fails to place a pedagogical emphasis on critical issues such as race, gender, and social class. In this respect, the program is much like other programs located in small cities across the province and constitutes a typical case (Patton, 2002). While two mandatory courses that explore issues of race, social class, sexual orientation, and so on, are offered, my review of the course listings for the Bachelor of Education program, which was available online, reveal that critical issues are also offered in two mandatory courses and one elective course. One of the two mandatory courses is seven hours in length. My anecdotal review of critical course offerings offered in the 13 TEPs across the province of Ontario revealed that, on one end of the spectrum, some TEPs offered no critical courses at all. On the other end of the spectrum, some programs integrated critical issues across the entire teacher education curriculum. The selected program’s critical course offerings fell somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.

It is possible that my posing of the research questions to graduates from a program where critical issues are more central to the overall aims of the program might have garnered different results. However, my choosing of participants from the selected program was a deliberate one. The selected program is situated in a small, predominantly White city that is marked by areas of high poverty as well as affluence. The selected TEP was intended to explore pre-service teacher conceptions of teaching in low income schools when such schools lacked racial diversity. I was interested in exploring what the data might reveal if racial diversity was not an obvious aspect of such schools.
A final limitation of the study was my use of the term inner city schooling in the advertising materials for the study. Such materials included the classroom script that I read to pre-service teachers (Appendix A) and the poster (Appendix B). In retrospect, my use of this term may have detracted participants from the study. It may have worked to racialize my research (Kobayashi, in conversation), and as a result, reduced the study’s attractiveness. A more generic advertising campaign may have attracted more participants to the study.

**An Overview of Chapters**

Chapter two explores the theoretical underpinning of race. It examines race as a socio-historical construct and the ways in which it intersects with other identity positions. The chapter continues with a discussion of Whiteness as a social location and the role of Whiteness Studies as a field of study. Race and its intersection with social class are discussed with respect to schooling. This is followed by a look of the racialization of poverty in Ontario. The racialization of poverty is an important area to explore because it speaks directly to the ways in which race and social class intersect with such factors as immigration in Ontario schools. The chapter continues with an examination of the geographies of race and a discussion of the ways in which understandings of place, landscape, and space are informed by issues of race. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research literature on pre-service teacher conceptions of teaching in schools that serve low income and minority schools. Chapter three outlines the steps that I took to produce this study, beginning with the recruitment of participants. I introduce each participant and reflect on how I experience race-of-interviewer-effects (ROIE) as a function of the interview process. Finally, I introduce the concept of race of interviewer trauma (ROIT) in relation to trauma
that researchers might experience during the research process as a function of their racial identity.

Chapter four explores geographies of schooling. Participants discuss conceptions of inner city neighbourhoods and geographic places where they believe inner city schools are located across the country. Participants also discuss their perceptions of differences between Canadian and American inner city schools. Chapter five presents data on teacher perceptions of inner city students. The chapter explores Britzman’s (1991) concept of the cultural story about the inner city student as “out-of-control” and as “surviving their environment.” The chapter ends with a discussion of pre-service teacher observations of inner city students on individual field placement and the impact of these observations on their own abilities to teach. Chapter six is a small chapter that discusses participant perceptions of inner city parents and their relationship to schools. This is followed by chapter seven which uses Britzman’s (1991) concept of the cultural story to examine the inner city teacher as (a) “saviour of at-risk students,” (b) “fish out of water,” (c) “waiting for retirement,” and (d) “dud: they can’t teach anywhere else.” Each of these cultural stories is examined, paying attention to how they manifest themselves spatially.

In chapter eight participants discuss issues of race and gender in relation to conceptions of inner city teachers. They also discuss their own racial and gendered identities and the meaning of these social locations for work in schools that serve low income and minority students. Chapter nine examines participant rationalizations for the extent to which classroom management is seen to be needed in schools that serve low-income and minority students. The chapter continues with an examination of the role that the field placement plays in how classroom management is experienced, when teachers learn to teach, and the impact of this experience on participant beliefs in their own teaching abilities.
Chapter ten explores teacher education policy in the province of Ontario. It explores the extent to which such policies discuss critical issues such as race, gender, and social class. The chapter begins with participant views on the role that their TEP played in exploring inner city schooling as a Canadian issue. The chapter presents an overview of findings from this research and makes recommendations to education stakeholders that include TEPs, the Ontario College of Teachers, and local school boards.
Chapter Two

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

The term race and Canada enjoy a long relationship. On the surface, the linking of these two terms may be considered to be incongruent and jarring. The rendering of racialized peoples as Other in the Canadian nation informs the schooling experiences of racialized, low income, and immigrant students. Researchers have long argued that Canada has an unsettling relationship to race (Dei, 2003; Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 1995) and that Canadians are still only coming to terms with it (Dei, 2007). Britzman (1991) asserted that cultural myths, “offer a set of ideal images, definitions, and justifications that are taken up as measures for thought, affect and practice” (p. 6). Canada’s cultural myths are those stories that shape how Canadians think about themselves and include multiculturalism. I discuss multiculturalism as a policy to demonstrate that for some Canadians, multiculturalism fosters a celebration of various cultures living in pluralistic harmony. To speak of race, in the form of antiracist education, is considered an affront to multicultural values.

An early study by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996; 2003) revealed that in-service and pre-service teachers were resistant to antiracist discourse, which they considered divisive because of its focus on race. They considered antiracism, with its focus on race, as oppose to culture, to be divisive. This is one of the ways in which multiculturalism is used to discursively negate the role that issues of race play in the unequal education experiences of
students (Dei, 2007). As a policy, it is often used to silence issues of race, even as it admits that Canada is a pluralistic nation. As a policy that has meaning in the daily lives of Canadians, multiculturalism works to stifle any discourse that suggests that all members of Canada’s cultural mosaic are positioned unequally, with respect to the social, the political, the economic, and the cultural.

Henry et al. (1995) emphasized that in Canada, “using the vocabulary of culture, any overt reference to race is avoided” (p. 25). The researchers suggested that Canada’s electronic and print media play a key role in casting racialized peoples as “invisible” and as “outsiders” to the Canadian nation (p. 2). Bannerji (2000) noted that in Canada, a paradox exists whereby racialized people simultaneously both belong and do not belong to the nation:

We are part of its economy, subject to its laws, and members of its civil society. Yet we are not part of its self-definition as “Canada” because we are not “Canadians”. We are pasted over with the labels that give us identities that are extraneous to us. And these labels originate in the ideology of the nation, in the Canadian state apparatus, in the media, in the education system, and in the common sense world of common parlance. (Bannerji, 2000, p. 65)

Writing about the experiences of immigrants in Canada, Peake and Ray (2001) pointed out that marginalized groups exist on two extremes in Canada. On the one hand, they are rendered invisible and on the other, they are highly visible because of their racial difference from the dominant group.

Bolaria and Li (1985) explained that Canadians often have difficulty conceiving of issues of race as informing Canadian society:

Many Canadians find it difficult to consider race as an important aspect of Canadian society, assuming that the society is racially homogeneous, albeit ethnically diversified. It is perhaps even more difficult for some to entertain the concept of racial oppression, when the policy of multiculturalism and the principle of democracy seem to offer protections for all cultural groups, irrespective of race. (Bolaria & Li, 1985, p. 8)
The researchers asserted that issues of race in Canada involve land claims by First Nations/Aboriginal peoples, compensation claims by Japanese Canadians as a result of their internment in WWII, and the application of the head tax to Chinese Canadians entering Canada prior to 1924. Each of these historic incidents suggests that race has always informed the Canadian nation.

Dei (2007), writing from an antiracist perspective, suggested that a colour-blind approach is often used to deny the impact that racial difference plays on the learning outcomes of racialized students:

I believe that race is a fundamental marker of lived experience in Canada....My own work in Canadian schools and the academy, in general, has pointed to the politics and denial of race and difference, even as race and racism stare us in the face. (Dei, 2007, p.vii)

This colour-blind approach masks the taboo that exists when race is named in Canada. Canadians are invited to believe that issues of race, racial discrimination, and racism are counter to a nation that prides itself on multicultural harmony.

This chapter examines the theoretical foundations of race. It explores race as a social construct that is both intersectional and discursive. The chapter continues with an examination of Whiteness as a racial standpoint and goes on to explore its intersection with issues of social class. Next, it explores the racialization of poverty, and discusses the ways in which issues of race inform geography. The chapter concludes with a short review of the research literature that examines pre-service teacher conceptions of working with low income and minority students in urban and inner city neighbourhoods. The chapter can be read as disparate parts that each inform this research. In this way, individual sections speak to the overarching conceptual framework that is being employed.
Reading Race as a Socio-Historical Construct

An examination of racial theory is necessary to conceptually frame this research because it is my assertion that terms such as inner city and urban can be conceived of as coded terms (Li, 2005) for spaces that are racialized (Kincheloe, 2004). In other words, I argue that the terms inner city and urban invoke the presence of racialized peoples. McGaskell (2008) explained that, in the city of Toronto, the term inner city first appeared in the minutes of a TDSB meeting in 1967. At the time, the issue under discussion was the funding of impoverished schools and plans to decrease classroom size in low-income communities where student drop-out rates were high. He wrote that, at that time, the term inner city was meant to be a geographical one that avoided discourse on social class. Since most of the poor in Toronto lived downtown, he explained, the term inner city became a euphemism for the word that could not be spoken (p. 130).

According to Kincheloe (2004) in the U.S., the term urban “has become in many quarters a signifier of poverty, non-White violence, narcotics, bad neighbourhoods, the absence of family values, dilapidated houses, and ineffective schools” (p. 2). Similarly, Daniel (2010) proclaimed that the term urban can be conceived of as text “unto which meaning is inscribed” (p. 834). She emphasized that use of terms such as urban must “move beyond notions of geography, space, and social class” to discussions that focus on the fact terms such as urban have been discursively associated with poverty, unemployment, and ethnic and racial diversity (p. 828). It is this association of the terms inner city and urban with the racialized poor that necessitates an exploration of issues of race. By focusing on issues of race, however, I do not mean to suggest that racialized peoples are impoverished. I suggest instead that structural factors such as migration, racism, and discrimination often create the conditions whereby some racialized groups experience poverty.
The concept of race seems simple, since skin colour is an obvious marker of an individual’s identity. However, race as a construct is multifaceted, complicated, and multilayered. Omi and Winant (1986) explained that race, as “common sense” dictates ways of understanding, explaining, and behaving in the world (p. 62). Dominant ideologies about race provide society with hegemonic understandings about racial identity, even though race is understood as a socio-historical construct that has no biological basis. Race must be understood as a construct or a metaphor instead of a biological fact because phenotypical characteristics do not distinguish human beings genetically (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994, p. 234).

As a socio-historical construct, racial meanings change over time. In addition, these meanings are valued differently, depending on place or location. Racial meanings then are never static but constantly shifting. According to Kobayashi and Peake (1994), racialization involves a process of creating subhuman Others that are measured against a White norm. This system is supported by economic, political, and cultural constructions of the exotic, foreign, evil, and darkness (p. 231). The process of racialization, they argued, involves the parallel racialization of labour and culture. Elsewhere, (2000) the researchers described racialization as “the process by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions...involving social/spatial segregation” (p. 393).

Despite a move away from a biological definition of race, discussions of race tend to focus on “biologically based human characteristics” or phenotypes (Winant, 2004, p. 155). According to Nash (2003) hegemonic understandings of race remain, “yet notions of the absolute social construction and fluidity of identity are not sufficiently powerful counter-arguments in the face of ‘commonsense’ understandings of what shapes identity, including
biological inheritance” (p. 644). Bolaria and Li (1985) insisted that “although skin colour does not provide adequate biological grounds for classifying people” it is used as superficial justification for classifying racialized peoples into menial jobs, for example (p. 1).

Winant (2004) emphasized that the shifting tendencies of race as a construct means that “race varies, racial categories shift, new races are invented, [and] old ones retired” (p. 189). As such, the parameters and markers used to determine race contract and expand over time. A group that may have been racialized in the past can shed that racialization and assume a new racial identity in a different socio-political and cultural context. This was the case with Irish and Italian immigrants in the U.S. who were once “socially and economically excluded from the Anglo-American elite” and, as a result, excluded from the category of White (Bonnett, 1998, p. 1045).

Winant (2004) theorized that the complexity of race often means that dominant group members locate issues of race with people who are racialized, despite being raced beings themselves. In North American culture, racial oppression is often invisible to dominant group members who may not see the various ways in which racism is experienced. Since the passing of Civil Rights legislation, racism remains more complex today than it ever was:

> It is no accident that concepts of race have become so much more variegated, or that racial politics have grown so much more complicated, in the aftermath of the twentieth-century racial “break” [WW1-1960s]. These are logical outcomes to the development of racial hegemony over the decades leading down to now. (Winant, 2004, p. xviii)

Issues of race continue to inform the day-to-day experiences of individuals and the running of institutions (Winant, 2004). Kobayashi and Peake (2000) wrote that racism can also be conceived of as the “manipulation of power to mark ‘White’ as a location of social privilege”
Winant (2004) urged that a key characteristic of race is its ubiquity and its ability to present itself in the tiny textured moments (Lewis, in conversation) of social relations.

The Intersectionality of Race

The theory of intersectionality posits that issues of race are always operating in conjunction with other identity markers, such as gender, social class, and sexual orientation. An intersectional approach to understanding both individual and group identity is key to ensuring that issues of race, for example, are understood as a complex multidimensional phenomenon instead of one that is flat, one-dimensional, or simplistic. For the purposes of this research, intersectionality informs individual participant experiences of the world, recognizing that each individual belongs to larger social, cultural, and political groups. Noting that at any given point in time multiple social identities are at play with each individual experience, it is important to recognize that in this research individual participant experiences took place at a particular place and time.

Collins (2000) defined intersectionality as a “particular form of intersecting oppressions” (p. 18) such as race, gender, and sexuality. She explained that “intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice” (p. 18). Collins (2000) argued that Black feminist scholars such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and the Cobahee River Collective were instrumental in putting forth analyses of the experiences of Black women and discussed such experiences in relation to social class, for example. Crenshaw (1991) suggested that an intersectional approach is required to understand the multiple social locations that individuals and groups occupy. Crenshaw (1991) examined the experiences of women of colour who suffer sexual abuse and theorized that this group often experiences multiple oppressions
because of their racial and gendered locations. She indicated that the experiences of racialized women are often missing from analyses on gender, which tended to focus on the experiences of White women. Crenshaw (1991) pointed out that the antiracist literature tends to focus on the experiences of racialized men. The experiences of racialized women, according to Crenshaw, are often made invisible because their experiences lay at the intersections of these two distinct areas. This invisibility has tangible consequences for how racialized women experience sexual abuse, for example, since their specific circumstances may not be recognized as being unique to women who fall into this category.

Taylor, Hines and Casey (2011) indicated that, as a contested framework, intersectional theory has been debated extensively since its appearance in the work of Crenshaw in the 1980s. The authors apply intersectionality to sexuality studies and suggest that “sometimes invoking this term in the present risks casting the debate as already passé” (p. 1). Scholars have revisited this concept to consider its potential and pitfalls and to determine how intersectionality might be extended or replaced.

Individual participants in this study shared their experiences from their individual social locations. For each participant, issues of race intersected with gender, social class, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, age, ability, marital status, family status, language, and religion to inform the conceptual framework that they used to experience the world. Intersectionality also implies that different identity positions operate at different points in time. The manner in which a participant experiences the world changes from moment to moment, such that how a participant responded to my research questions in the summer of 2010 may be different from how they might respond to those same questions today (Levine-Rasky, in conversation).
With respect to the ways in which race intersects with issues of gender, Kobayashi and Peake (1994) argued that the categories of race and gender are “naturalized, both in the academic discourse and in society in general” such that the terms are normalized (p. 230). Like race, gender is understood as a construct whose is depended upon “multiple lenses” for meaning (Butler, 1990). I use Butler’s (1990) notion of gender as performance in this work. Butler (1990) theorized that the body can be understood in a performative sense. As performance, the body itself “has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (p. 185). She explained that acts, gestures, and enactments can be understood as performance because their true essence are mere fabrications that are created and upheld through bodily signs and at the level of discourse.

If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. (Butler, 1990, p. 186)

Therefore, when I speak of gender, I am speaking of the ways in which gender is performed.

Taylor et al. (2011), critiqued debates about intersectionality for making gestures toward the inclusion of sexuality as “a spoke on the intersections wheel” (p. 2). They argued that these gestures often lack any real sense in which sexuality is “empirically substantiated, demonstrated and ‘delivered’” (p. 2). The researchers critiqued intersectional analysis for its tendency to “leave[s] out the intimate connections, mutual constitutions, and messiness of everyday identifications and lived experiences” (p. 2). While feminist debates have long discussed the problems inherent in weighing one social location against another, they wrote that “positions of privilege and advantage have often not been subject to an intersectional interrogation” (p. 2). Instead, binaries are often created around identity positions and the expense of “connection and complexity” (p. 2). Viewing identity position s intersectional in
nature enabled for an analysis of the data that relied on several constructs operating at the same time.

**Reading Race as a Discursive Category**

Race is a discursive category (Winant, 2004). Despite the fact that race is understood as an “unstable and ‘decentred’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle,” issues of race continue to play a substantial role in the language that is used to shape behaviour (p. 68). Hall (1997) described discourse as “ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice” (p. 6). Discourse can also be thought of as the cluster or formation of ideas, images, and practices that help us talk about a topic (p. 6). It is about what one says and what one does. Lewis (1993) theorized that discourse can also be understood as consisting of negotiated and multiple social practices. She described discourse as:

> A set of social practices that signify positions in subjectivity which are always multiple and which are always negotiated within the broader political and economic relations that mark our day-to-day lives” (Lewis, 1993, p. 113).

Lewis (1993) asserted that discourse is created through tangible acts that have tangible outcomes. She explained that discourse is always negotiated through power. Because of this connection to power, discourse can work to interrupt and transform or can simply mirror and reinforce existing power relations (p. 114). Britzman (1991) pointed out that discourse becomes powerful when “it is institutionally sanctioned” (p. 17). She emphasized that curriculum is a form of discourse which “intones particular orientations, values, and interests, and constructs visions of authority, power, and knowledge” (p. 17).

Kobayashi and Peake (1994) theorized that discourses “are constructed as ideological traditions that gain efficacy through repetition, inscription, and representation” (p. 238).
These ideological traditions create hegemonic understandings about inner city schools, for example, such that representations of inner city students become that-which-goes-without-saying. Discourse works to shape understandings of inner city schooling as a construct. By this I meant that the ways in which schools that serve low income and minority students are spoken of in the everyday, through personal conversations, news and print media (Henry & Tator, 2000), and by institutions, produce tangible outcomes such as the creation of education policy. Henry and Tator (2000) warned however, that the term discourse is an elusive one that is difficult to define, since it can sometimes “include everything and anything to do with expressive human behaviour” while at other times, it can refer to “the specific practices and expressions of people and their institutions” (p. 27).

I pay attention to discourse and policy because policy is not created in a vacuum. Policy is dependent upon social actors for its creation (Ostrom, 2007). Policy surrounding schools marked by low income and minority students relies on the manner in which such schools are discursively constructed and the manner in which the issues that such schools grapple with are presented. A deficit framework that casts schools that serve low income and minority students as needing to be “saved”, for example, affects the nature of this policy, especially during is creation and implementation. Such a framework impacts the extent to which agency is considered to be something that is already present in such schooling spaces. On the other hand, a framework that positions schools that serve low income and minority students as spaces that are complex and informed by structural inequalities, might create education policies intended to tackle such structural issues head-on. Such policies might emphasize redressing systemic imbalances in such schooling contexts, while the deficit model simply works to reinforce the status quo. I present this example to illustrate that discourse
informs policy and that policies create tangible outcomes for schools that serve low income and minority students.

Discursive formations define what is appropriate and what is not appropriate with respect to a particular topic (Hall, 1997). Hall (1997) wrote that these formations also determine which types of knowledge are considered “useful, relevant, and ‘true’” and define which individuals “embody its characteristics” (p. 6). Similarly, discursive practices describe “the stories we believe we can tell to and of ourselves” (Lewis, 1993, p. 113). Lewis (1993) wrote that these stories help us to negotiate our positions within political and economic relations of power (p. 113). Foucault (1990) described the polymorphous techniques of power as the various ways in which power works to validate and invalidate (p. 11). Lewis (1993) explained that discourse and power are inextricably linked. She described power as the ability to access processes that legitimize and “enforce meaning through language” and through practice (p. 113). Just as Morrison (1992) wrote that it is the powerful one who sees, it is the powerful one who legitimates and validates the actions, words, beliefs, and opinions of Others.

Frankenberg (1993), writing about the manner in which White women make meaning of issues of race in their lives, suggested that the construction of racialized peoples as inferior occurs through racial discourse:

For the greater part of U.S. history...arguments for the biological inferiority of people of color represented the dominant discourse...for thinking about race. Within this discourse, race was constructed as a biological category, and the assertion of White biological superiority was used to justify economic and political inequities ranging from settler colonialism to slavery. (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 13)

In Frankenberg’s example, racial discourse works to legitimate acts of racism that were in fact, acts of power. Yon (2000) explained that race can be understood as the mapping of various discourses onto human bodies. He wrote, “it is the crosscutting and mapping of
different discourses onto bodies that make race a discursive category, but at the same time one of the most naturalized discourses available for making sense of the world” (p. 10). He suggested that the manner in which race is spoken of can be conceived of as a discussion about human bodies. Yon argued further that race can also be understood as a “discourse of geography and culture” (p. 11).

Researchers have argued that race is an elusive construct. Its elusiveness is due to its presence in language that is coded (Li, 2005). Foucault (1972) theorized that discourse often represents what cannot be said. Winant (2004) theorized about the concept of “new racism” as the “shift from crude forms of scientific racism based on biologically determined social hierarchy to racism premised on belief in immutable cultural differences” (p. 11). The emphasis on culture is of particular importance to the Canadian context. Winant (2004) wrote that this language of new racism is evident in terms such as “values,” “incompatible cultures,” and “complex differences” (p. 11). Such language makes it possible to discriminate based on race, without ever having to utter the term (p. 11). Li (2005) defined racial discourse as language that uses coded or hidden subtexts that provide a rationale for signifying race while still adhering to democratic principles of equity and justice. Yon (2000) theorized that issues of race in Canada, “articulated through the codes of nation, culture, and identity, divides those who belong from those who are made other” (p. 2). He pointed out that the discourse of multiculturalism and immigration further complicates how new racism functions in Canadian society.

An analysis of language is useful in order to determine how it functions by “excluding and including particular meanings, accepting and rejecting certain forms of behaviour, and by marginalizing some behaviours” (Giroux, 1997, p. 239). Writing of racist discourse in Canada’s English print media, Henry and Tator (2000) suggested that
democratic racism “in its ideological and discursive form is deeply embedded in popular culture and popular discourse” (p. 42). They defined democratic racism as a form of racism that refers to both an ideology “which emphasizes racism” and “a set of discursive policies, and practices that regulate behaviour in specific institutions and settings” (p. 42).

Democratic racism, in the form of racist discourse, can be found in families, communities, schools, universities, media, and popular culture. Discourse is learned in infancy and is transmitted in the various ways in which learning takes place. One common discourse used by print media, according to Henry and Tator (2000) “is the notion that certain minority communities themselves are culturally deficient” (p. 5).

In this form of dominant discourse it is assumed that certain communities (e.g., African Canadian) are more prone to deviant behaviour; these groups lack the motivation, education or skills to participate fully in the workplace, educational system, the arts and other arenas of Canadian society. (Henry & Tator, 2000, p. 5)

This reading of some minority groups as culturally deficient has tangible outcomes that can be felt at the level of schooling. Another type of language used by the Canadian print media is one which constructs a binary of “us” versus “them.” In this binary, “the ubiquitous ‘we’ which finds its way into newspaper reporting and editorializing represents White dominant culture” who is positioned as being law-abiding, hard-working, and peace-loving” (p. 6). On the other hand, the “they” of print media reporting represents the other side of the binary. It refers to racialized communities who are “portrayed by the journalists and editors as possessing different (undesirable) values, beliefs and norms” from that of the dominant culture (p. 6). Ultimately, these constructions mean that racialized groups exist, “outside the boundaries of Canadian national identity” (p. 6). Such a discourse works to shape the schooling experiences of low-income and racialized students in Canadian schools since students who hail from cultures that are seen as possessing different values, beliefs, and
norms, using this same logic, might not have the same educational aspirations as students from the dominant culture.

**An Exploration of Whiteness as a Racial Standpoint**

In North American society, racialized and non-racialized people live along clear demarcations of race that are “rigidly defined and enforced” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 60). Within this restrictive framework, Whiteness is constructed as being symbolic of purity; racial mixing results in “unpure” individuals (p. 60). As a relatively new field of research inquiry, especially in the area of teacher education, a focus on Whiteness shifts attention from that which involves only racialized peoples to that which involves Whites (Giroux, 1997). An examination of Whiteness works as a shift away from race being discursively invoked only in relation to racialized Others. It functions to un-mask this often unnamed and unmarked moral position. Giroux (1997) wrote that this project has most recently been taken up by critical race scholars, and, in the United States by, conservative right-wing groups as “a broader articulation of race and difference” (p. 376). Whiteness is “increasingly understood as an ideological, racial and political marker” (p. 376).

Whiteness Studies began to take shape in the early 1990s when social groups began to problematize it as a racial location that was situated at the centre. As centred, and therefore unseen, all other racial groups are measured from this normalized perspective (Frankenberg, 1993). This is where the power of Whiteness lies. Levine-Rasky (2001) described Whiteness Studies as the examination of the structural and cultural contexts of the ways in which Whiteness is linked to privilege, White racial identities, and White ethnicity. It examines how racism works to marginalize the Other, and is “co-extensive with economic,
political, psychological, and social advantages for Whites at the expense of racialized groups” (p. 272).

Whiteness Studies examines the complexities inherent in Whiteness as a social construct. Leonardo (2002) made a distinction between Whiteness as a racial location and White people as human beings. He argued that while Whiteness can be seen as a form of racial discourse, the category “White people” as a socially constructed category is one that is based on having White skin. As a constructed category, Leonardo (2002) asserted that White people benefit from, and are privileged by, Whiteness. However, he explained that it is possible for White people to articulate a non-White discourse.

As a critique of the distinction between Whiteness and White people, Dei (2007) cautioned that this practice must be critically analyzed for the ways in which it works to “absolve...individual and collective responsibility” (p. x). He wrote that distinguishing between White identity and Whiteness often allows dominant groups to “become immune to the system” whereby some bodies have the privilege to opt out of challenging racism through inaction (p. x). Dei (2007) cautioned further that in the context of antiracist discourse, bodies matter and White bodies are often given “powerful currency in social settings” (p. xi). For this reason, distinguishing between Whiteness and White people denies the currency that is assigned to all White bodies in North American culture, and I would argue, globally.

Kobayashi and Peake (2000) wrote that Whiteness is the “normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions and... by occupying space within a segregated social landscape” (p. 393). Whiteness positions these segregated spaces as not set apart from the living spaces of racialized groups, but as normal. Whiteness also has the power to suggest that racism is a thing of the past and is irrelevant in today’s
society. The researchers emphasized that it “incorporates some lessons from the civil rights movement, erases racial differences, and pretends that its values apply to everyone” (p. 394).

As a standpoint, Whiteness subjects everything within its frame of reference to the White gaze. Kobayashi and Peake (2000) explained that Whiteness manifests itself less as overt racism, and more in its power to deny that racism is a factor in everyday life. It deracializes and normalizes common beliefs and practices, and legitimizes these beliefs and practices.

Whiteness can also be conceived of as a racial perspective of the world that is supported by “material practices and institutions” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32). It can be understood as a set of linked dimensions that include White structural advantage, race privilege, and as a location from which White people examine themselves, others, and society (Frankenberg, 1993). Frankenberg (1993) applied a study of Whiteness to gender and suggested that the inability of White women to understand the relationship between their lives and issues of race involves White racial privilege (p. 9). This privilege places White women in a position where they are unable to see how issues of race impact U.S. society (p. 9). Whiteness is not a unified position but one that is marked by inconsistencies due to differences in social class, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, and other social locations (Carr & Lund, 2007; Giroux, 1997; Levine-Rasky, 2000).

With respect to geography, Carr and Lund (2007) emphasized that Whiteness in Canada is complex because of “the number and variety of exogamous relations and blending of peoples” which works to confuse the meaning of race (p. 3). Peake and Ray (2001) asserted that Whiteness in Canada is conveyed through a myriad of ways including immigration policies, assimilation strategies, and violence or segregation. They wrote that in the “national imaginary, the “real” Canada—Canada as the great White north—lies beyond the
nation’s largest cities in the countryside and small towns (also overwhelmingly White)” (p. 181).

**Reading Race and Social Class in Education**

An examination of schools that serve low income and minority students, and teachers’ role in such schools, is incomplete without a parallel examination of issues of social class. McLaren (2003) wrote that one of the main predictors of student academic success is social class. He stated that “an individual’s social class and race at birth have a greater influence on social class later in life than do any other factors—including intelligence and merit” (p. 176). Social inequality is linked to “disproportional access to wealth in a society where...the poor are often ostracized to states of unworthiness and inferiority” (p. 177). McLaren (2003) emphasized that exploitation lies at the core of North American culture. This exploitation occurs at the hands of “capitalist social relations of production” (p. 177).

hooks (1994) has long argued that in the United States there remains an “intense silence” about issues of social class, especially in educational settings (p. 177). Teaching and learning in schools that serve low income and minority students cannot be problematized without a focus on the impact that issues of poverty, for example, have on how students learn. Although issues of social class may not be explicitly stated in educational settings, research in Canada by Levine-Rasky (2007) and in the United Kingdom by Reay (2007) indicated that privileged parents are keenly aware of social class differences among students in schools. Levine-Rasky’s (2007) research, which examines Jewish middle-class parents’ attitudes toward increasing diversity in a Toronto area school, indicated that these parents often objected to their children learning in classrooms with racialized, immigrant students. Such students were described as disruptive “hooligans”: 
Parents expressed a desire to avoid difference in their children’s classrooms in the form of violence, “roughness”, disorderly behaviour, “problem kids”, “hooligans”, and those who prefer to “muck about”. Primarily euphemisms for working-class students, these parents were preoccupied with discipline and personal security and with the children who represented a deviation from these ideals. (Levine-Rasky, 2007, p. 409)

This finding is corroborated by Reay (2007) in the U.K. who found that White middle-class parents were often threatened by failing public schools and interactions with working class students.

Reay (2007) explained that middle-class parents in her study were more successful than working class parents when speaking to teachers about their children’s education. Using cultural capital as a conceptual framework, she argued that mothers’ involvement in their children’s schooling is linked to their own histories and experiences with education, which impacts their children’s experiences in schools. Middle-class parents who were successful in school exhibited more self-confidence and “a sense of entitlement” with respect to their own involvement in schools. Middle-class parents were able to successfully describe their needs if there were disagreements with teachers and displayed self-assurance and an ability to offer opposing views with teachers, which, Reay (2007) argued, is due to cultural capital.

In contrast, the working-class mothers were much more hesitant and apologetic and far more likely to disqualify and, at times, contradict themselves when talking to teachers….While the middle-class mothers in the study could be assertive in interaction with teachers, the working-class women’s high levels of doubt and anxiety mostly resulted in apologetic, tentative approaches to staff or occasionally escalated into displays of temper….Then, as one of them commented forlornly, “there’s no way you’re going to get your point of view across.” (Reay, 2004, p. 77)

Low income and minority parents must navigate a schooling terrain that they may have few experiences with (Banks & Esposito, 2002) or with which they may be unfamiliar, as in the case of immigrant parents. Parental involvement in schooling impacts the learning outcomes of students. Special attention must be paid to the ways in which such parents experience schools.
With respect to social class and pre-service teachers, studies on pre-service teacher reactions to antiracist education indicate that some hold troubling views about social inequality and are heavily invested in the myth of meritocracy (Ahlquist, 1991; Solomon et al., 2005; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001; Tatum, 1992). Research by Solomon et al. (2005) on Whiteness found that pre-service teacher views were rarely interrogated:

Significant numbers of White candidates are locked into the individualistic and meritocratic view of education. There is a clear sense that if people work hard enough they will overcome the myriad obstacles. There is limited interrogation of the way in which the ideals of meritocracy and individualism are also impacted by social conditions. (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 160)

The researchers suggested that for the participants in this study, success was tied to “individual effort and agency” (p. 160). An early study by Ahlquist (1991) found that in discussions about social class pre-service teachers lacked empathy for those less fortunate than they were and considered racialized minorities and the poor to be lazy, undeserving, and drug addicts (p. 162).

The roles of teachers and administrators who work in low income and minority schools are crucially important. These roles are powerful enough to influence the manner in which such students experience school and the ease with which low-income and minority parents are able to work with schools for the benefit of their children. The silence surrounding issues of social class in schools means that the experiences of low-income students and families may never be verbalized. Teacher education courses that explicitly discuss the impact of social class on the performance of low-income, middle-class, and wealthy students, for example, might provide pre-service teachers with evidence that schools play a role in perpetuating the existing social class positions of students (McLaren, 2003).
For the purposes of this research, gaps in social class surround the education of a predominantly middle-class teacher workforce for work with low-income and minority students. When teachers are educated to believe that all students have the same opportunities to succeed in school, they might enter schooling spaces with the belief that student failure is a function of the students’ race or social class background, as found in research by Groulx (2001) and McIntyre (1997). When teachers are educated in such a way that issues of social inequality are rarely problematized, they are being mis-educated (King, 1991). Such a mis-education has serious consequences for students who need schools the most. When teachers are educated in such a way that they must apply for and be accepted into specific TEPs before these issues are made problematic, instead of receiving this knowledge as a mandatory component of their teacher certification, the majority of pre-service teachers graduate from programs with little or no knowledge that is critical to their performance with low-income and minority students.

Arguments made against the mandatory inclusion of critical discourse in TEPs suggest that teachers may not necessarily desire to teach in low-income schools and minority schools. Therefore, only those pre-service teachers who are interested in teaching in such schools should be exposed to critical issues. I argue that critical pedagogy is far from a luxury that pre-service teachers can learn about, if they choose. For pre-service teachers to become knowledgeable about issues of race, gender, and social class as they pertain to schooling is necessary to their roles as teachers and will be applicable to their teaching in all classroom contexts. When teachers are educated using a conceptual framework which suggest that critical knowledge is not required knowledge, they are cheated. So too are those students whose futures depend on the ability of teachers to understand how a particular social location, such as social class, impacts their experiences in school.
The racialization of poverty in Ontario.

The definition of inner city schools as schools with large percentages of students living in poverty inform student achievement. As in the United States, inner city schools in the city of Toronto are attended by large numbers of immigrant families (TDSB, 2010). Since poverty rates are high among immigrant groups (Galabuzi, 2006) inner city schools house an array of social issues that teachers must take into account when tailoring their teaching for such classrooms. A major question that surrounds this research is how seven new teachers conceptualize teaching in a schooling context where White, middle-class students are not necessarily the norm.

In 2001 in the United States, 17% of American children lived below the poverty line (Obidah & Howard, 2005). However, this number increased to 44% for students attending schools located in inner city areas of large and midsize metropolitan areas (p. 20). Obidah and Howard (2005) noted that “the majority of economically disadvantaged students and families of color live in the inner cities of America” (p. 249). They explain that boarded up buildings, excessive waste on the streets, and poor sewer systems characterize the spatial aspects of such communities. This suggests that the physical space itself impacts the living conditions of students and the communities where inner city schools are located. In this example, the inner city school itself is coded by race, social class, and space.

According to the Colour of Poverty campaign (2007), an Ontario-wide community-based project which examines the impact of poverty on racialized communities, report that 47% of racialized children compared with 32% of children in the general population live in poverty. In the city of Toronto, although racialized families make up 37% of all families, they account for approximately 59% of poor families. Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate
for European Canadians fell by 28% while the poverty rate for racialized families rose by 361%. Galabuzi (2006) explained that in 1980, 24.6% percent of new immigrants to Canada (0-5 years) lived below the poverty line. By 1990, this number increased to 31.3%. Five years later, in 1995, “four out of every ten racialized immigrants who held less than a high school education, were among the poorest 20% in the country” (p. 17). He described this as the “racialization of poverty” (p. 17).

Research shows that poverty is increasingly linked to new immigrant settlement patterns in Canada (Preston & Murnaghan, 2005). Preston and Murnaghan (2005) asserted that racially marginalized communities in Canada are often residentially segregated. However, the researchers pointed out that the residential segregation of the U.S. is not easily mapped onto a Canadian context:

Patterns of segregation in Canadian cities differ from those in American cities. Levels of segregation in Canadian cities are lower than those in American cities and the effects of racialization are more complex. There is no Canadian equivalent of a ghetto in which a visible minority group dominates the neighbourhood population. (Preston & Murnaghan, 2005, p. 69)

Similarly, Peake and Ray (2001) indicated that in Canada, residential spaces are racially coded for racialized peoples, despite the fact that residential segregation among Whites in suburban areas remain unmarked:

The residential geographies of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Canadian cities have frequently been described in terms of “ghetto” or “near ghetto” imagery, but the same descriptors have never been attributed to the even more “segregated”, but entirely normalized, geographies of White Canadians living in the distant suburbs of Toronto and Montreal. (Peake & Ray, 2001, p. 180)

Research by Kazemipur and Halli (1997) found that poverty is increasingly being linked to urban spaces in Canada because of this trend in immigrant settlement to Canadian cities. The researchers indicated that income determines both poverty levels and places where immigrant families can afford to settle. In 1996, 36.7% of racialized groups living in urban
centres lived in poverty compared with 20.9% of the overall population. Galabuzi (2006) emphasized that the racialization of poverty has far reaching implications for racialized groups:

In urban centres like Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, where racialized group populations are statistically significant, the normalization of racially segmented labour markets has an impact beyond the racialization of poverty. Racialized groups face other social patterns such as sustained school drop-out rates; the racialization of the penal system; the criminalization of the young; and the racial segregation of urban low-income neighbourhoods. (Galabuzi, 2006, p. 18)

It is this notion of sustained drop-out rates from high schools that speaks to the need for teachers to be educated in such a way that they do not perpetuate a cycle of under-achievement for some racialized groups in Canadian schools.

While racialized peoples represent 13.4% of Canada’s overall population (Statistics Canada, 2005) 75% of new immigrants to Canada are racialized (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). New immigrants often settle in Canada’s three largest cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Kazemipur & Halli, 1997; Statistics Canada, 2005) which works to equate the urban in Canada with racial-ness and immigration simultaneously. According to Teelucksingh (2006) racial meanings are increasingly being mapped onto cities like Toronto, such that Canadian cities are increasingly being read as racialized spaces. This racialization of Canadian cities, because of the presence of racialized and immigrant populations, has meaning for how inner city schools located in such spaces are constructed.

Despite research that shows that immigrants often settle in large Canadian cities, Kern (2005) and James and Saul (2007) stated that immigrants are also increasingly settling in inner suburban areas. Kern (2005) shared that, in Toronto, the number of high poverty neighbourhoods in inner suburban communities has increased over the past 25 years. Immigration settlement patterns in inner and outer suburban neighbourhoods complicate strict definitions of urban and suburban in Canadian cities (Daniel, 2010).
A report by the grass roots project People for Education (2009) indicated that “the majority of newcomers to Canada settle in Ontario’s urban/suburban areas” and discusses that such settlement created “unique” challenges (p. 3). The report highlighted suburban communities such as Brampton and Mississauga that are home to high levels of immigration. According to the group’s 2007/2008 annual survey, Brampton’s population had a 48% immigrant population with 45% of its residents speaking a mother tongue other than English. In the suburban community of Markham, 57% of its population were immigrants and 40% of residents spoke a mother tongue other than English. Schools that serve low income, minority, and immigrant students require pedagogical approaches that meet the needs of such students. New and existing teachers must be cognizant of the fact that definitions of suburban and urban are complex and such definitions are dependent upon specific places for meaning.

A 2010 report by the TDSB’s (2010) Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) project reveals that in one identified school of the pilot project, which seeks to narrow the achievement gap of low income students, 85% of families have an annual household income of less than $30,000.00 (TDSB, 2010). The project received $8 million dollars from a Learning Opportunities grant by the Government of Ontario (McCready & Soloway, 2010). Altogether, seven inner city Toronto area schools were identified as Model Schools. Model schools work in partnership with universities and other education stakeholders to ensure that students from low SES backgrounds are provided with pedagogical opportunities focused on their academic achievement. The average annual household income of most families at the school was less than the low income cut off (LICO) for metropolitan Toronto. In one identified school, 85% of parents are from immigrant backgrounds and 60% live in homes with large families of three or more children. The demographics of this school provide
evidence that teachers being educated to meet the needs of increasingly diverse classrooms are faced with demands that a teacher education curriculum must endeavour to address.

**An Examination of Geographies of Race**

The manner in which schools that serve low income and minority students are constructed and named, for instance, the term “inner city” itself, is linked to readings of such schools as distinct spaces. Massey (1994) wrote that space is inextricably linked to time and that analysis of place should always pay attention to space-time. Space must also be understood with respect to social relations, which are “never still” and are always dynamic. Massey (1994) theorized that the social relations of space are “experienced differently, and variously interpreted by those holding different positions as part of it” (p. 3):

> The spatial is thought of in the context of space-time and as formed out of social interrelations at all scales, then one view of a place is a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings…But the particular mix of social relations are part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside. Such a view of place challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities. (Massey, 1994, p. 5)

This makes identities of place “unfixed, contested and multiple” (p. 5). Massey discussed the dualistic aspects of space/time constructions. This duality is always read as separate where the two never meet. Time is often associated with the feminine and space with the masculine. Time is further associated with history, geography, civilization, politics, and transcendence. On the other hand, space is constructed as absence. As absence, it is seen as relating to “stasis, passivity, and depoliticization” (p. 6).

Peake and Kobayashi (2002) explained that issues of race in geography have been “well established for at least two decades” (p. 51). Much of this work involves studies that examine residential segregation. Pulido (2002) wrote that the study of race in geography as a discipline is isolated due to “disciplinary fragmentation, the limited number of people of
color within the discipline and ...weak ties to ethnic studies” (p. 46). She contended that the absence of racialized geographers produces a “limited set of experiences that inform the discourse” (p. 52). This results in the, “voices and experiences of non-Whites” being “filtered through a White lens” (p. 52).

Work in cultural geography surrounds an examination of race as a social construct as well as an examination of Whiteness. Mitchell (2000) described race as a geographical project and one that is “constructed in and through space, just as space is often constructed through race” (p. 232). He emphasized that issues of race are dependent upon language, which “give rise to, specific kinds of space-specific sites and places, both for their development and reproduction” (p. 232). According to Mitchell (2000), the languages of racism “do not exist in a vacuum: they are effected on the streets of cities, in the fields of the countryside, and in their large-scale spaces of migration that make up the contemporary world (p. 232).

With respect to landscape, Kobayashi and Peake (2000) asserted that “Whiteness is a geographic phenomenon” that is linked to the manner in which landscapes are read. “Whiteness is also a deeply embedded aspect of understanding landscape, as a complex expression of human action, including its dominant values, mores, aesthetic tastes, and cultural practices” (p. 52). The researchers emphasized that antiracist landscape analysis involves both understanding the ways in which White power is expressed and “advocating for new places and positions” (p. 52). Kobayashi and Peake (2000) stressed the need to understand “the historical and geographic specificity of ‘race’ and its durability in influencing human landscape” (p. 52).

Schein (1999) argued that landscapes convey discourse about life in the Americas. He wrote that cultural landscapes can be understood as racial projects. Racialized landscapes can also normalize or challenge racial formation and racist practices. The inner city school, as
a function of the inner city, can be conceived as a hegemonically racialized space. By hegemonic, I am referring to common sense ideas that maintain the status quo. As a particular place, inner city schooling discourse must be problematized because such a discourse constructs the inner city schools as being located in particular spaces and attended by particular students. In this dissertation, I ask new teachers to discuss their conceptions of the inner city school as a distinct space or landscape in the hopes of contributing to new understandings of geographies of schooling as a newly emerging field (Reay, 2007).

Issues of race impact places and spaces. Kobayashi and Peake (2000) and Delaney (2002) argued that all places are racialized, even when racialized bodies are absent from spaces. Kobayashi and Peake (2000) wrote that spatial racialization involves placing everyone in “specific, but highly variable, circumstances” (p. 395). They emphasized further that place matters because social process, such as Whiteness, relies on specific landscapes and spatial interpretations. Therefore, an examination of “empty spaces” works to uncover the silence, exclusion, and denial of issues of race, which work to reinforce Whiteness (p. 400).

In an article that examines issues of race and the 1999 Columbine, Colorado high school shootings in the United States, the researchers indicated that the process of normalization as it occurred in this White, suburban community can best be understood in relation to the ways in which Whiteness stood for peace, normalcy, and law abiding citizens. Two senior students at the high school killed twelve students and one teacher while injuring countless others. The students belonged to a group known as the “Trenchcoat Mafia” and the aftermath of the shooting was widely televised.

The researchers explained that the shootings were rendered an “aberration” in this predominantly White neighbourhood because the cultural story of race maps such violence onto racialized places such as inner city and urban schools (p. 394). For most Whites, they
argued, it is normal for race not to constitute a factor in explaining the events as they unfolded, as was evident by community reaction to the shootings where issues of race were rarely taken into account. White members of the Columbine community were unable to see issues of race and therefore discounted or negated the manner in which race informed the shootings. The researchers argued that the hegemonic is maintained through this very process of writing race out of the equation.

The inner city, the “reservation,” and the “border” have been conceived of as “conventional geographies of race” (Delaney, 2002, p. 6). I would replace the term “conventional” with the term “hegemonic” to suggest that the processes involved in racializing these spaces along conventional lines involve the presence of racialized bodies that are marked deviant, inferior, undeserving, and Other. Delaney (2002) emphasized that the outer city, the heartland, gated communities, the boardroom, the faculty lounge, the locker room, classrooms, prisons, and convenience stores can all be conceived of as racialized spaces. Delaney (2002) and Kobayashi and Peake’s (2000) emphasis on the existence of race, even in spaces that are seemingly devoid of race, is an important consideration for this research because most pre-service teachers who took part in the study were placed in field placements and communities that were predominantly White. Delaney (2002) asserted further that spaces are produced using ideologies of colorblindness, integration, race consciousness, separatism, and nativism. Spaces reinforce aspects of the social with respect to issues of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and so on. Therefore, a discussion of place also requires an analysis of relocation, dislocation, and displacement.

McLaren’s (1980) book *Cries from the Corridor* attempted to locate inner city schooling issues in Canada, instead of displacing (Delaney, 2002; McKittrick, 2006) such issues onto the United States. These discursive practices impact inner city schooling policy since, at the
level of popular discourse alone, the mapping of the inner city school onto the United States works to create a sense in which such issues are American ones. As an American issue, there is no need to problematize where Canadian inner city schools are located and the manner in which such schools might function. Further, there is little need to worry about which students and parents are served by inner city schools and what their pedagogical and community needs might be.

Yet it is this inconceivability of the Canadian inner city school and the discursive practices that make it so, that this dissertation attempts to address. As a supposed American problem, the inner city school is associated with America’s problems with race. In the same way that Canadians often believe that Canada is different from the United States because of a supposed lack of involvement in slavery (Carr & Lund, 2007), the admission that inner city schools do and have always existed in Canada, can be read as an admission of race. I argue that American “ghettos” are conceived of places where Blacks live. American inner city and urban schools are racialized as Black, even though Blacks are among many groups, including Whites, who reside in urban and inner city areas. This is despite the fact that Blacks also live in middle-class and upper middle-class neighbourhoods, as well as in suburban areas (Pattillo, 2005; Twine, 1996). The displacement of inner city schooling issues onto an American landscape works to simultaneously construct inner city schooling as not only an American schooling problem, but one that has to do with the Black urban poor.

Popular media images that depict life in American inner city and urban areas tend to construct such spaces as one of urban decay and violence. These images are consumed by mass audiences and help to form opinions about where the inner city is, what the inner city looks like, and who inner city residents are. Kincheloe (2004) wrote that representation of the inner city school in film become “homogeneous locales of peril where no one should
venture” (p. 3.) I would insert the term “White” in his sentence to suggest a sense in which
the reading of the inner city as a no-go zone has much to do with Whiteness. As Kobayashi
and Peake (2000) argued, the “hood” is framed as the “no-go area where the urban
‘underclass’ live” (p. 396). The stark contrast between media framings of the inner city as a
place and actual inner city spaces in cities like Toronto, has implications for the manner in
which prospective teachers approach designated inner city schools and the values that they
map onto the students that such schools serve. Kincheloe (2004) argued that media images
present obstacles for urban and inner city students themselves:

These representations, as they filter into the racial common sense of the folk
psychologies of the larger society, present real obstacles to urban students attempting
to succeed in schools. In this context, such students have to deal with negative
stereotyping in relation to their scholarly aptitude and their character. (Kincheloe,
2004, p. 3)

According to Daniel (2010) the urban in Canada is experienced in ways that are different
from the American context. Popular media representations construct urban spaces as distinct
spaces that are inhabited by particular people, who are most often racialized:

The distinct forms and markers of “urban” portrayed in the American media,
including abject poverty of the inhabitants, dilapidated homes, schools and buildings,
and images of racially minoritized bodies marauding the “urban jungle” (as well as
the violence that is levied at Whites who enter those spaces) has not been a Canadian
reality. American visitors are often surprised at the realities of urban spaces in
Canada—the availability of subsidized housing that, though in some state of disrepair,
is relatively clean and ordered. (Daniel, 2010, p. 827)

She emphasized that the meaning of the term urban itself must be reconceptualised.

Daniels’s argument is corroborated by Kern (2005) who explained that the city of Toronto
has not experienced White flight away from its downtown core as is experienced in U.S.
cities, which changes the racial makeup of inner city spaces in Canada when compared with
the United States.
A recent report by Hulchanski (2010) entitled *The Three Cities within Toronto* suggested that the city of Toronto is divided by income levels. High-income areas of the city are located in the “central city and close to the city’s subway lines” (p. 1). In contrast, the city’s low-income areas are located in the northeastern and northwestern areas of the city, the location of the Jane-Finch community. The middle-income area of the city geographically exists between the city’s centre and the city’s north end:

Poverty has moved from the centre to the edges of the city. In the 1970s, most of the city’s low-income neighbourhoods were in the inner city. This meant that low-income households had good access to transit and services. Some of these neighbourhoods have gentrified and are now home to affluent households, while low-income households are concentrated in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the city (the inner suburbs), with relatively poor access to transit and services. These neighbourhoods are found mostly in the northeastern and northwestern parts of Toronto. (Hulchanski, 2010, p. 1)

The report is important because it highlights the ways in which the social relations of geographic space are fluid instead of static.

**Literature Review: Pre-Service Teacher Conceptions of Inner City Schooling**

The coalescing of complex issues such as poverty, immigration, and, in some cases, violence (TDSB, 2005) in inner city schools means that new teachers entering this school setting are doubly inexperienced. They are inexperienced with respect to teaching and with respect to teaching in a context where such social issues inform the everyday lives of students. Ultimately, these issues inform a teacher’s pedagogy as well. On May 23, 2007, grade nine student Jordan Manners became the first Canadian student killed by gunfire on school property in Canada (Srikanthan, 2007). I taught grade eight at an elementary school in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community from 2002-2004. At the time, Jordan was a grade six student at the school. I watched media coverage of Jordan’s death as a doctoral student in the academy hundreds of miles away. What struck me the most about the news media
coverage was the tremendous ways in which his death impacted students and teachers at C.W. Jeffries High School. Jordan’s death, which was constructed by the news media as an unusual occurrence, stood in stark contrast to the ongoing stories of loss and grief that my students shared in our classroom.

It is imperative for teacher educators to provide spaces in TEPs where pre-service teachers can make meaning of the relationship between the social relations of schools that serve low income and minority students, and their effects on the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in classrooms. How, for example, might the death of a student inform the approach that a teacher might take toward a particular lesson, especially on days where the school or wider community itself is dealing with a tragic loss? How might these social relations impact a teacher’s relationships with parents? How might a teacher’s approach to the formal curriculum change when life changing events occur in a student’s life? In this section, I present data from research on pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city and urban schools. The terms inner city and urban are used interchangeably to reflect the manner in which these terms are used by respective researchers in the research literature. I also use the term “inner city” in this section to stay true to its usage in the literature.

The research literature reports that pre-service teachers often hold troubling attitudes concerning teaching in schools that serve low-income and minority students in inner city and urban schools (Milner, 2006; Murrell, 2000; Obidah & Howard, 2005). However, despite these troubling attitudes, I recognize that many teachers enter the teaching profession with a caring attitude toward students. Obidah and Howard (2005) wrote that the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of urban and inner city schools are unfamiliar to both pre-service teachers and teacher educators, contributing to the gap that exists between pre-service teacher knowledge of and experience with low income and minority students:
We begin by laying out the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of urban inner city living and schooling-terrains that are often unfamiliar to the majority of teachers admitted into our teacher education programs and yet teachers whom we are required to prepare to teach in these settings. More important, yet often not addressed, is the fact that these terrains are often unfamiliar to many teacher educators as well. (Obidah & Howard, 2005, p. 249)

The research literature on urban teacher education often speaks to the cultural mismatch between pre-service teachers and low income and minority students, which Kincheloe (2004) described as a socio-cultural chasm. According to Sleeter (2001), in the U.S., 1996 NCES data revealed that enrolment among public school students was 64% White, 17% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 4% Asian. In 1996, the teaching workforce was 87% White, 7% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% “American Indian/Alaskan Native”, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Ryan et al. (2009), Levin et al. (2007), and Livingston and Antonelli (2004) pointed to the cultural gaps between the teaching profession and the students in the province of Ontario. Solomon et al. (2005) indicated that the racial and cultural gap between the teaching workforce and increasingly diverse classrooms requires a critical analysis of how teachers understand their own racial identities in relation to the students that they teach. While a White racial identity does not necessarily translate into a teacher’s inability to effectively teach racialized students and while racialized teachers are not always effective teachers of racialized students (Ryan et al., 2009), studies have shown a tendency for pre-service teachers to demonstrate fear, reluctance, and apprehension towards racially diverse, low-income students (Groulx, 2001; Obidah & Howard, 2005; Olmedo, 1997; Picower, 2009).

According to Hampton et al. (2008), the research literature on pre-service teacher conceptions of teaching low income and minority students in inner city neighbourhoods is divided into three broad themes. The first theme examines pre-service teacher attitudes toward teaching in an inner city and urban context. The second theme explores the effect of urban field placement on teacher preparedness to teach in such schools. The third theme
addresses media representations of inner city and urban schooling. More specifically, the literature is further divided into pre-service teacher perceptions of teaching African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2000), Latino students (Groulx, 2001), and inner city and urban students in general (Easter et al., 1999). Hampton et al. (2008) argued that the research literature lacks a variety of studies that examine different aspects of pre-service teacher conceptions about inner city and urban schools.

Obidah and Howard (2005) explained that new teachers are often reluctant to teach in inner city schools. Some would prefer not to teach at all than to teach in such schools. Research by Groulx (2001) reported that pre-service teachers in her study expressed fear that they might be overwhelmed by teaching in an inner city setting and that they wished to postpone such teaching until they had gained more teaching experience. Often, they used popular media and their own experiences to formulate opinions about such schools (Grant, 2002; Paul, 2001; Trier, 2005). Popular media plays a key role in shaping pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city and urban schooling. Films, in particular, often portray such schools in biased and stereotypical ways with teachers who are often positioned as “saving” inner city and urban students (Grant, 2002).

Films tend to portray inner city students as being more “susceptible to gangs, violence, and drugs” than students in suburban schools (Hampton et al., 2008, p. 273). These constructions, whether or not they actually exist, greatly impact how pre-service teachers approach pedagogy, student achievement, working with low income and minority parents, and, and working as teachers in inner city communities. hooks (1992) theorized that a critique of film is important because films often work to “determine how Blackness and Black people are seen” (p. 5). On the other hand, Kincheloe (2004) emphasized that academic inquiry into the representation of urban schooling continues to be viewed as a
“frivolous form of research with little to contribute to the study of teaching and learning” (p. 4).

Pre-service teacher conceptions of low income and minority students affect the manner in which they approach such students in schools. Although beliefs speak only to teacher attitudes instead of to larger structural and systemic issues that impact schooling for such students, teacher beliefs inform teaching practices. Research by Easter et al. (1999) examined pre-service teacher beliefs about diversity and urban education. The findings reveal that teachers who were raised in rural or suburban environments often lacked direct knowledge of low income and minority student and often relied on media for such “knowledge”. Forty-one pre-service teachers in Hampton et al. (2008) were asked two open-ended questions about their perceptions of urban schools with respect to physical appearance, resources, teachers, and students. Results of the study indicate that the pre-service teachers often used terms such as “run down” and “jail-like” to describe urban schools. Other term that were listed include “neglect,” “lack of maintenance,” “old,” “out of date,” “broken,” and “in disrepair” to describe the physical aspects of the school (p.278). I must state here that these terms specifically described U.S. inner city and urban schools.

Research by Hampton et al. (2008), Groulx (2001), and Marxen and Rudney (1999) indicated that pre-service teachers cited concerns about issues of security in inner city schools. Hampton et al. (2008) wrote that issues of crime, drug use, and gangs were “mentioned frequently in their [pre-service teacher] responses”:

Another theme concerns the subjects’ sense of security. Mentioned frequently in their responses are issues such as crime, drug use and gang-related activities. These perceptions have led to remarks about measures taken to guard against such activities, measures such as the presence of metal detectors, fences around schools, bars on windows, and security guards at school entrances. These measures result in the perception of urban schools as “jail-like”. (Hampton et al., 2008, p. 278)
One limitation of Hampton’s study is its failure to discuss the effect that an African American researcher when the survey was distributed. Some participants, aware that the questionnaire explored issues of race and inner city schooling, may have censored their responses because of the presence of the African American researcher, who also taught the section of the course in which the questionnaire was distributed. The researchers did not acknowledge this point as a limitation of the study, although participants may have been concerned about offending the professor/researcher if the results were shared with her/him.

With respect to concerns about issues of safety that participants in Hampton et al. (2008), Groulx (2001), and Marxen and Rudney (1999) cited, Picower (2009) explained that pre-service teachers’ fear of racialized people, and in particular of African Americans, informed the discourse of fear that participants in her own study expressed. In a research article that explored how White pre-service teachers conceive of issues of race in teaching, Picower found that a discourse of fear was often present when participants spoke of racial minority students in low-income neighbourhoods:

Fear was by far the most prevalent hegemonic story shared. The participants expressed a sense of anxiety in situations with people of color, largely based on stereotypes from their earlier experiences and influences from their family and the media. This anxiety was escalated to a sense of terror in the few situations in which they found themselves to be the only White people. With only a few exceptions, all of their stories involved African-Americans as dangerous criminals who violated the participants’ sense of safety. (Picower, 2009, p. 202)

These hegemonic understandings of African Americans inform teacher perceptions of African American students. For the participants in Picower’s study, the term “safety” as it applies to the racialized Other, can be read as through a lens of racialized fear as well as one that equates Whiteness with innocent, law-abiding victims of racialized violence. Later in this dissertation, I speak to the perception of inner city and urban schools as jail-like (Hampton
et al., 2008) and its implications for how this perception implicates particular bodies that are both raced and gendered.

Research by Trier (2005) asked pre-service teachers to record what they would expect to see in a typical inner-city school and to indicate the source of their perceptions. Trier’s study examined changes in pre-service teacher beliefs about inner city schools after critically analyzing the school films Blackboard Jungle, The Principal, Dangerous Minds, 187, The Substitute, Lean on Me, and Stand and Deliver. Results indicated that participants used terms such as “run down” and “slum” to describe inner city schools. Participants also poke of inner city and urban students as having “behaviour problems”:

The images that come to mind are, unfortunately, negative. I think of minority students from poor neighborhoods. The schools are lacking resources and not in very good physical condition. There are significant behavior problems and the school as a whole is not run well. There would be fences and gates that would further detract from the physical appearance. Daily attendance would be poor and not a lot of teaching would be accomplished on a daily basis… I get my impressions from films, television, and the mass media in general. (Trier, 2005, p. 175)

The above narrative relies on a deficit framework of inner city spaces and communities in order to be sustained. The school itself is “not in very good physical condition” and the presence of “fences and gates”, speak to the jail-like feel of inner city schooling spaces. However, the perception that students would not attend schools regularly because of poor daily attendance coupled with a belief that “not a lot of teaching would be accomplished” maps ineffective pedagogy onto this learning space. Trier (2005) warned that participant responses were not created in a vacuum, but “lived up to the stereotypes that are constructed by and circulate within the social, political, and media channels of discourse in our society” (p. 175).

One limitation of Trier’s (2005) study is that pre-service teachers were given an opportunity to write about changes in their perceptions of low income and minority students
without any connectedness to such students in actual schools. By discussing their perceptions alone, the pre-service teachers are not provided with an opportunity to explore classroom pedagogy. A change in attitude or belief, if not accompanied by a desire to enact real change in the lives of marginalized students, reads like an academic exercise that lacks grounding in the day-to-day work of teachers.

The researcher could have asked the participants to observe and record instances in schools that serve low income and minority students, that challenged the cinematic representations of such students and schools, and to discuss the implications of this discrepancy for their teaching. Such a strategy might have provided participants with an opportunity to see beyond the hegemonic representations that the films offer and to explore the ways in which positive aspects of inner city schooling are often invisible in the popular school-film genre.

Pre-service teachers in Hampton et al. (2008) described their perceptions of low income and minority students with respect to categories of race, socio-economic status, and intrinsic qualities such as motivation, intelligence, preparation, and parental support (p.280). Participants mentioned African American, Latino, and White students as the racial groups most often found in inner city and urban schools. They failed to cite Asian students as attending inner city and urban schools. Seventy-two percent (72%) of participant responses contained references to issues of social class, suggesting a sense in which social class intersects with issues of race. Forty one (41%) of respondents felt that inner city and urban students were from poor families (p. 281).

Concerning the intrinsic qualities of low-income and minority students, most participants in Hampton et al. (2008) cited qualities such as student motivation and intelligence as fixed or qualities that students are born with. As fixed, they attributed student
motivation to student identities and the communities in which they lived. For instance, some participants assumed that inner city students were not interested in learning:

The kind of students in an urban school setting will not be motivated to learn. I don’t believe it has anything to do with their intelligence or academic abilities, by [sic] may be the situation at home. Some of the children are neglected and only received attention and assistance at school. (Hampton et al., 2008, p. 283)

Participants did not consider that student motivation and intelligence could be affected by external influences such as effective teaching. This finding is telling because it suggests that for these future teachers, the motivation of low income and minority students is a function of their socio-economic status (SES) and the community in which they live, as discussed in James (2004). This type of thinking alleviates any role that pedagogy, instruction, teachers, parental assistance, and the school itself might play in helping students to transcend their existing social class positions.

Further, participants in Trier (2005) described inner city students as “out of control” and “aggressive” (p. 175), while participants in Paul (2001) conceived of urban students as “violent and disruptive,” “confrontational and angry,” “unpredictable,” “loud,” “using foul language at times to get points across,” “self-righteous cockiness,” and “quiet but sneaky” (p. 26). Paul (2001) explained that only two responses described inner city students as “polite” and “friendly” (p. 26). Paul’s (2001) pilot study examined the ways in which “societal messages about race, class, and gender seep into [teacher] consciousness and potentially impact teacher decision making” (p. 25). Participants from three graduate level education courses participated in the study. The decision to examine the views of graduate students was based on the assumption that graduate students had “more life experiences from which to draw” (p. 24). Half of the 58 participants were asked to respond to a visualization script where they were instructed to think about an urban school and to list the images that came
to their minds upon hearing the term urban. The other half were asked to view two film clips and to respond to questions concerning it.

Ninety percent (90%) of respondents described inner city students in racial terms, as either Black, Latino, or from a racialized category, a finding that was echoed in Hampton et al., (2008). Participants described inner city students as “dirty” with “dirty hands” (p. 26). Other responses included “beautiful with hair braided,” wearing “clothes [that] give him a sort of ‘funky’ look,’” and “untidy, perhaps poor personal hygiene” (p. 26). Inner city students were perceived to be impoverished with comments such as “on welfare” and “poverty and stagnation will be with them forever” (p. 26). With respect to parents, respondents reported that they would not expect to see “much parental involvement” in inner city schools (p. 26). Similarly, participants in Groulx (2001) indicated that parental support would be lacking and as a result, inner city students would be undisciplined and unmotivated (p. 83).

A limitation of Paul’s (2001) study was the decision made by the researchers to focus solely on the views of graduate students. One cannot assume that the views of graduate students might differ greatly from the view of undergraduate students in education, based on their life experience. Hegemony invites all citizens in a given society to conceive of issues of race and social class, for example, in particular ways that benefit the status quo. This invitation does not discriminate between young and old. All members of a given society are invited to believe in these common sense ideas.

Speaking of what she calls a crisis in urban education in the U.S., Weiner (2002) argued that urban classrooms are often led by teachers with little experience in inner city and urban settings. In Canada, pre-service teachers graduating from programs that specifically address urban and inner city may enter such classrooms feeling unprepared for teaching in
this context. However, Grant (2002) cautioned that pre-service teachers may be overconfident about their abilities to teach in schools that serve low-income and minority students and may not be adequately prepared for the experience. Their lack of preparation, she warns, may result in their premature burnout and departure from the teaching profession (p. 77) since pre-service teachers sometimes underestimate the complexities involved in teaching in inner city environments:

Overconfident pre-service teachers can watch films about inner city high schools with little understanding about what these schools are like and be secure that their natural commitment to students and their idealism will make them superior to nearly all teachers currently practicing. (Grant, 2002, p. 92)

This sentiment is echoed by Easter et al. who (1999) cautioned “if students believe they can teach in the midst of cultural diversity and then find those beliefs incongruent with reality, the profession may lose teachers who could have made a difference” (p. 215).

Groulx (2001) explained that in the United States, newly hired pre-service teachers in inner city and urban schools “drop out at nearly double the rate than do other new teachers,” even with extensive critical teachings about their roles as agents of change (p. 62):

Even after teacher preparation in a social-reconstructivist program that explicitly espouses liberal, progressive goals for teachers to act as change agents and advocates for students in urban minority schools, graduates reported anguish and emotional exhaustion as they gave up hope in their children and reverted to traditional practices in order to survive. (Groulx, 2001, p. 62)

The U.S. literature on pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city and urban schooling provides sufficient evidence that pre-service teachers require extensive theoretical and practical knowledge about racially diverse, low income schooling environments. Research on urban teacher education conducted in a U.S. context is useful for providing Canadian teacher educators with insight and direction into some of the best practices utilized in teacher education programs, as well as some of the pitfalls that can be avoided when engaging pre-service teachers with critical pedagogy.
However, it may be faulty to assume that the U.S. research literature can always speak to our Canadian educational context. Differences in the manner in which schools are governed and the manner in which teachers obtain certification mean that special attention must be paid to aspects of education that are unique to Canada, and specifically, to provincial levels of education that govern teaching. For example, the U.S. research literature often reports that urban and inner city schools are attended by large numbers of African American and Latino students (Olmedo, 1997). However, in Canada, schools that serve low income and minority students may reflect racial and cultural diversity that extend beyond these identified groups. Further, the Canadian context may also reflect large immigrant populations and as well as religious diversity (James & Saul, 2007; TDSB, 2010). This complicates such schools beyond the Black and Latino groups that the U.S. literature often reports.

In reviewing the literature on urban teacher education, few of the U.S. studies problematize the meaning of the terms Black and African American when describing the racial composition of schools. There is often little acknowledgement of the diversity that exists within the African American community. The term African American is often used as an umbrella term for the existence of Blacks in an urban and inner city school setting when, in fact, not all Blacks in the United States identify as African American and not all Blacks in the U.S. are born in the United States, but can be new immigrants or first generation Americans. Students who fall into each of these categories may experience schooling differently, and as a result, may perform differently in schools, with some students experiencing success in schools. Labelling all Black students as African American fails to speak to the nuances of a Black racial identity in the United States. Such descriptions fail to capture the layers of complexity that mark any one racial group’s experience of school.
The inclusion of such demographic data would speak to issues such as language and religion within the Black and African American community. Such data would speak to the intersections of race with ethnicity, immigration, citizenship, religion, and language, and in doing so, would create more in-depth understandings of how African American students experience schooling.

Conclusion

As I conclude this chapter, I turn to a discussion about feminist theory since much of my research focuses not only on issues of race, but also on issues of gender. In this study I ask participants to discuss issues relating to gender in an attempt to name those aspects of teaching that have become so common place, that they often go unquestioned. For instance, I ask participants to share their conceptions of their own gendered identities as they relate to their work in low-income and minority schools. Using this line of questioning, I was interested in learning how male versus female participants might think about teaching in such a context. I wanted to learn whether women teachers might conceive of their being female as informing their teaching in these schools in particular. Given popular discourse on the “feminization of teaching” (Froese-Germain, 2006; Martino & Kehler, 2006) I was interested in learning participants’ views on this debate by posing broad questions relating to issues of gender as they relate to schooling.

My focus on issues of gender begins with a realization that patriarchy continues to dictate how relations of gender play out in schools and especially in teaching as a profession. The relationship that men and women have to teaching has always been a gendered one (Prentice & Theobald, 1991). Further, the gendered nature of teaching has always intersected with issues of race and social class as (Llewellyn, 2006; Strober & Tyack, 1980). Prentice and Theobald (1991) argued that teaching as a profession has been “implicated in the articulation
and perpetuation of gender inequality in Western society” (p.5). The researchers suggested that women teachers were positioned as “naturally” suited to working with young children or to being assistants to males in leadership roles. The effect of this discursive practice could be seen in the extent to which the profession, as often dominated by women, was considered a profession at all, as opposed to conceptions of the type of work that was seen as being “natural” to women. The essential nature of this discourse can still be felt today.

As a result of this, teaching has often been conceived of as not only women’s work (Apple, 1986) but as belonging to the female sphere (Apple, 1986; Harrigan, 1992; Llewellyn, 2006; Strober & Tyack, 1980). According to Harrigan (1992) teaching changed from an “itinerant, entrepreneurial, part-time activity to a spatially confined, hired, primary activity with a guaranteed income” (p. 483). Harrigan (1992) indicated that low pay, bias against married female teachers, and “intrusive supervision” meant that the typical teaching career lasted approximately six years on average (p. 486).

With respect to what has been termed the “feminization” of teaching, Prentice and Theobald (1991) theorized that by 1881 in Toronto, more than 80% of teachers were women. These women worked in schools that were controlled by public school boards. Harrigan (1992) suggested that between 1880 and 1905 there was an 83% increase in public school teachers in Canada, with women who increased their numbers by 126% and men by 3%. By 1920, 83% of public school teachers were women. Harrigan (1992) asserted that from that date onward, “for every five-year period, except during World War II when young men served in the armed forces, the growth rate for male teachers exceeded that for females” (p. 489). During the depression, women teachers lost jobs to their male counterparts since, at that time, school boards restricted married women from teaching.
Harrigan (1992) wrote that by 1930, approximately one in six women between the ages of twenty and forty had taught in a public school in Canada. This number does not include recent immigrants. “Similarly, one in six women would become a teacher at about the age of twenty in both the interwar period and in the two decades following World War II”, he explained (p. 487). Figures were higher for lower-middle-to middle-class women. At this time, male teachers predominantly taught in rural areas of Ontario. Generally, male teachers were heads of households compared to women teachers who were younger, and often dependent on their families for financial support. Prentice and Theobald (1991) explained that when fewer immigrant male teachers were available for hire, and as rural trustees found the hiring of male teachers too costly, women here hired in greater numbers in local communities.

The researchers emphasized that the presence of women always placed teaching’s status as a profession into question. This questioning about whether teaching was indeed a profession was directly related to teaching’s conception as women’s work. Prentice and Theobald (1991) explained that during the mid-nineteenth century school boards often rationalized the hiring of female teachers in financial terms since women teacher could be paid half the wage of male teachers. However, Harrigan (1992) wrote that the increase in male teachers reflected the extension of schooling to high school when women occupied 80% of elementary teaching positions as late as 1960. He emphasized that large numbers of men entered the teaching profession only during the last quarter-century, when the education and income levels of teachers improved and there was less occupational segregation.

In Canada, Harrigan (1992) explained that teaching offered social class mobility to individuals. The simultaneous expansion and extension of schooling meant that teaching became a viable option for individuals from lower-middle-class backgrounds. More and more
children attending schools, along with the extension of the actual school day, meant that teaching offered “secure, respectable employment and social mobility for educated sons and daughters of lower-middle status” (p. 483). Teaching was attractive to unmarried women who preferred the “respectable” status of teaching compared with factory work and domestic labour. Domestic labour, on the other hand, was at times, the only viable option for racialized women, especially Black women (Collins, 2000). This suggests that access to the teaching profession itself was steeped in relations of gender, as well as that of race.

Llewellyn (2006) wrote that after WWII, social and political sentiments concerning teaching, and its impact on society, projected values of femininity, a commitment to the nuclear family, and propriety onto the female teacher. Today the predominance of women in elementary schools is historically rooted in the inability of women to work in other spheres. Yet, it is clear that historical accounts of the experiences of women in the teaching profession is also raced, given that teaching as a profession was most often available to White women, as opposed to racialized women (Llewellyn, 2006).

Feminist accounts of the historical legacy of teaching must also be viewed through a lens of Whiteness. Frankenberg (1993) explained that feminist women of colour critiqued mainstream feminism for its negation of the experiences of racialized women in much feminist theorizing. Much of this critique was aimed at Second Wave feminism, which occurred between the 1960s to the 1990s. In response to this critique, beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, White feminists began to theorize about issues of race by exploring the intersections of their own Whiteness. This critical self-reflection on the part of mainstream feminists paved the way for a more intersectional approach to the examination of issues of gender. Racialized feminists continued their critique of gender using a raced-based lens that was borne out of experience. Today, feminist theorizing includes an
examination of issue of race, with attention paid to Whiteness. Further, issues of gender may also pay attention to masculinities (Barrett, 2001).

By paying attention to issues of gender, I begin with the premise that teaching is a gendered act that positions men and women differently, with respect to their roles as teachers. By asking participants to discuss issues of gender, I attempt to name the “goes without saying” aspect of teaching. For instance, Apple (1982) asserted that the presence of men as administrators in schools is one manifestation of patriarchy (Apple, 1982). He suggested that this gendered division in teaching leadership cannot be separated from larger societal forces that are also historical in nature. Apple (1982) explained further that “educational authority relations have been formally patriarchal” (p. 3). This speaks to the fact that even in schools that are predominantly female, and even when women occupy administrative positions, they often work within the confines of a patriarchal structure (Lewis, in conversation).

Movement toward the deskilling and intensification of teacher’s work “occurs on a terrain and in an institution that is populated primarily by women teachers and male administrators”, argued Apple (1988, p. 50). Women’s work, he wrote, is often the target of both rationalizations, and attempts to “gain control over it” (p. 54). This control is also necessarily a control over teaching and curriculum. The researcher asserted that teaching can be considered as both a vertical and horizontal division of labour. In a vertical division of labour, women are disadvantaged in relation to men with respect to working conditions and wages. In a horizontal division of labour, women are “concentrated in particular kinds of work” (p. 55) such as in elementary teaching. I discuss the ways in which relations of gender were rooted in the early years of the teaching profession to illustrate that a gendered reading of teaching is necessary if one is to understand how and why issues of gender, as they
manifest themselves today, are connected to wider historical and societal forces. In chapter three, I take a systematic look at the research process. I discuss my use of a Black feminist standpoint as the lens through which I present this work. Each participant is introduced and I reflect on the impact of my racial identity through a discussion of race-of-interviewer-effects (ROIE). In response to my experiences of the research process, I introduce a new concept that I have termed race-of-interviewer-trauma (ROIT).
Chapter Three

Making Meaning out of Methods

Introduction

We live in the eighth moment of qualitative research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) described this moment as the fractured future. They explained that seven research moments periods preceded the current one. These moments include the traditional (1900-1950), the modernist (1950-19780), blurred genres (1970-1986), the crisis of representation (1986-1990), the postmodern period that saw the emergence of experimental and new ethnographic research (1990-1995), post experimental inquiry (1995-2000), and the methodologically contested present (2000-2004). The eighth moment “confronts the methodological backlash associated with evidence-based social movements” and is concerned with moral discourse, sacred texts, and critical conversations about “democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community” (p. 3). I describe the seventh moment in detail below because of its overlap with the current period.

The seventh moment of qualitative research is described as a series of ruptures and shifts that have changed the ways in which qualitative research has been conducted since the 1970s. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) used the metaphor of tying knots in a handkerchief to describe this reflexive turn in research inquiry. This turn suggests that “issues are not closed, options are still open, and the field of qualitative research remains very much in flux” (p. 2). The seventh moment was a time when classical texts were re-evaluated and previously
silenced voices were examined. This period made use of performance texts and was concerned with the contributions that research made to community and to individual identity positions such as race, gender, and social class. The 1980s saw “triple crises of authority, representation, and praxis” that critiqued the manner in which qualitative research is evaluated (p. 3). This critique saw a move toward participants taking a more active role in how their stores are told. It also ushered in the conducting of research with the purpose of addressing social issues.

When looking toward the future of qualitative research, these knots in the handkerchief concern the relationship between ethics and science, a methodological revolution, a crisis surrounding the purpose of ethnography and the social sciences, and a crisis in how results in qualitative research are presented. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) warned that there exists no clear-cut moment of qualitative inquiry in any one period. Instead, the field of qualitative research is a field of discourse, one where dialogues are “created, entered, left, and revisited on many occasions and in different forms” (p. 9).

**The Impact of Race and Geography in Asking the Research Question**

Kobayashi and Peake (2000) wrote that place matters. Issues of place played an important role in the manner in which this research was conceptualized. On several occasions before the start of my data collection, the discourse that circulated in formal and informal exchanges about my research suggested that I ought to conduct research at universities that were located in the city of Toronto, such as York University or the OISE/U of T. The discourses ranged from (a) the pre-service teachers at my cite of choice were too “WASPy” and too privileged to engage in discussions about inner city schools, to (b) pre-service teachers at York & University of Toronto/OISE had more experience with inner city
schools by virtue of being in a large city, and (c) the small, predominantly White city of the TEP “had no inner city schools.” My intent to solicit the participation of pre-service teachers from the program of choice was often met with surprise and confusion, which inadvertently led to the question, “But why aren’t you collecting data from students at York?”

This suggestion that I ought to interview pre-service teachers from the York program was persistent because York University addresses issues of race, diversity, and equity in education as a core feature of its program. The program’s emphasis on critical issues in education was seen as a rationalization for my conducting research with only York pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers in my chosen program were constructed as both White and privileged with respect to race and social class. Because of this, I was invited to believe that these future teachers should not be invited into discussions about inner city schooling as a Canadian issue, even though they were enrolled in a certified TEP and on their way to becoming teachers in Canadian schools. Again, pre-service teachers in the chosen program are more similar to the average pre-service teacher graduating from a program in the province of Ontario. Graduates from the chosen program are less like pre-service teachers enrolled in programs with a critical focus, which remain in the minority in the province. Teacher education program with a critical focus do not reflect what I would call a typical case (Patton, 2002) with respect to teacher education (Lewis, in conversation).

What struck me, however, about the discourse that circulated around where I ought to conduct my research was the sense that the pre-service teachers’ supposed privileged status somehow deemed them exempt or beyond reproach with respect to how they conceptualize issues that relate to low-income students in schools. There was also a sense of surprise in my choosing to conduct research in a place where such research was least expected. Yet it is this sense of expected-ness that I hope to question in this research. The popular discourse that I
encountered suggested that, by virtue of their privilege, the pre-service teachers enrolled in the chosen program did not need to reflect upon or engage in research providing increased knowledge about inner city schooling. Yet, such research creates a discursive space for these future teachers to think though any role that they might play in a school system that is still grappling with how to meet the needs of marginalized students. It was as though to engage these particular pre-service teachers in conversations about poverty, race, social class, and diversity was somehow offensive to who they were, or more importantly, to the discourse of who these teachers were constructed as being.

I raise this point to emphasize the role that language and discourse played at each stage of this dissertation. Language, as a political tool, was used to racialize my research by suggesting that pre-service teachers at York (read racialized) would be more suited to my topic. The suggestion that I collect my data at York, located in Canada’s most diverse city, also functioned to displace (Delaney, 2002) my research onto a place where such research is expected. This speaks to the ways in which issues of race and geography often become intertwined. This research seeks to disrupt or make “unnatural” (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994) these taken for granted or naturalized assumptions about who should conduct research where, and about whom.

**An Overview of the Recruitment Process**

The recruitment process began in April 2010. Eight pre-service teachers were selected from one TEP located in a city in the province of Ontario. Pre-service teachers were enrolled in the 2009-2010 Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program or the final year of the Concurrent program. I used purposeful sampling to obtain participants. I advertised a “call for participants” using an advertisement through the program’s B.Ed. student email list-serve
(see Appendix B) with the assistance of the program’s Registrar’s Office. This same email was then printed and functioned as a poster that was placed on bulletin boards throughout the building of the TEP. Patton (2002) indicated that purposeful sampling is effecting when the researcher seeks data from “information-rich cases.” He described information-rich cases as “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 47). This method of sampling is best used in cases where the unit of analysis will “illuminate the question under study” (p. 46). All B.Ed. students received the email notice. The email notice was printed and posted on bulletin boards throughout the program in the form of a poster. In that same month, I visited two B.Ed. courses and read an approved recruitment script to the pre-service teachers present. The script (see Appendix A) received clearance from the Research Ethics Board (REB). Prior to my class visits, course instructors received an email (see Appendix C) requesting their permission for me to visit their classrooms.

Research Ethics Board (REB) approval was granted on April 15, 2010, approximately one week before pre-service teachers completed their B.Ed. year. This time frame affected the number of participants who were willing to participate in this study. Pre-service teachers who were interested in taking part in the study indicated that the time of year affected their ability to participate. In May 2010, after conducting the first in-depth interview, I used snowball sampling to illicit participation from additional participants. At that time, I became concerned that many of the new graduates were leaving the city for their hometowns. Snowball sampling was the most effective method to obtain participation from new graduates who had not yet left the city.

In late May 2010, I re-submitted a request to the REB for permission to:

- create an online Facebook advertisement of the recruitment poster,
• conduct focus group research,
• offer an honorarium of $20.00 for participation in the in-depth interview and/or the focus group session,
• update the poster advertisement to reflect my need for focus group participants, and
• visit courses that offered during the summer intercession.

On May 12, I received REB approval for these changes.

**Method: In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups**

Between May and August 2010, I conducted eight in-depth interviews and three focus group sessions with pre-service teachers selected from one TEP in the province of Ontario. Seven of the eight participants were new graduates from the B.Ed. program (either one-year or concurrent). One participant was a pre-service teacher who was enrolled in the third year of the concurrent program. In this dissertation, I use data from the seven B.Ed. graduates because of my concern that inclusion of the data provided by the undergraduate concurrent student might create inconsistencies in my findings (Kobayashi, Levine-Rasky, Lewis, in conversation). This decision was approved by my dissertation advisory committee. Interviews were conducted on the university campus in a location that was different from the location of the TEP, in order to protect the identity of each participant. I was granted permission by a department at the university to conduct interviews and focus groups. I met participants personally to ensure that they did not have to identify themselves by name to anyone.

Interviews are involved in up to 90% of social science investigations (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). According to Holstein and Gubrium (2003) interviewing is the “most
widely used technique for conducting systematic social inquiry” (p. 3). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the interview as a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 268). They distinguished between the structured interview, where the interviewer “knows what he or she does not know,” and the unstructured interview, where the interviewer must rely on the respondent for knowledge about the phenomena being studied (p. 69). A semi-structured approach is a combination of these two interview formats. Each interview ranged in length from 44 minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes in length (See Individual Interview Schedule Appendix D). At the start of each interview, each participant signed the Letter of Consent for Teacher Candidates form (Appendix E). Each participant was provided with the Letter of Information for Teacher Candidates form (Appendix F) to read ahead of time. Participants were asked to contact me if they had any questions pertaining to the study. Participants were then paid $20.00 cash for their participation at the start of each individual interview.

Focus groups.

I conducted three group sessions and invited each of the seven participants to participate. Altogether, five of the seven participants took part in the group sessions. Madison, Tristan, Bredz, Audrey and Tara participated in the first focus group (Appendix G). Madison, Tristan, and Bredz participated in the second (Appendix H). Tristan, Bredz, and Audrey participated in the third focus group (Appendix I). Madison volunteered to be interviewed in order to provide her comments for the third focus group because she was away from the city when the session was being conducted. At the start of each of the individual interviews and focus groups, participants were provided with a Campus Resources
for Research Participants form (Appendix J). Participants were then paid $20.00 cash for their participation at the start of focus group.

My use of the focus groups as a secondary research method served several functions. First, it enabled me to verify the data provided by participants during the interviews. Secondly, it created a community of learners and thinkers about inner city schooling since participants were able to meet other colleagues interested in discussing the topic. Thirdly, it provided me with additional time with each participant beyond the time spent with each during the individual interview. Each group session was given a theme and participants were provided with the information pertaining to each session via email, ahead of time. The first focus group session explored inner city schooling in Canada. The second session explored issues of race and gender. The third session was structured as a media analysis of the film Freedom Writers (LaGravanese, 2007). Participants were asked to watch the film ahead of time and were provided with guiding questions. Participants were asked to discuss and critique the film during the focus group based on their observations.

A focus group can be conceived of as an interview with a small group of people about a particular topic (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) advised that the focus group is an interview as opposed to a conversation among individuals. He wrote that, in the academic arena, focus group interviewing began in the 1950s. It was borne out of the work of Robert K. Merton as a market research tool. Focus groups were used to gather information on consumer preferences for products in a group setting. Patton (2002) explained that, with focus groups, participants do not need to reach consensus about issues being discussed, nor do they have to disagree with each other. The object of the group interview is to “get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p. 386).
I also selected the interview in conjunction with group sessions to ensure that I could clearly delineate each participant’s perspective on inner city schools. I was aware that in choosing only the focus group as my only method, I might not be able to delineate the extent to which one participant’s views might be affected by the ideas of another (Lewis, in conversation). My use of the interview as the primary research method ensured that participants had an opportunity to express their ideas in a one-on-one setting without the influence of others.

There were times during the interview and group session when I was unsure when and if to interrupt the flow of the conversation. Sometimes I feared that my interjections might censor participant ideas. I reminded myself that my role in both the interviews and the focus groups was that of researcher, a role that involved asking questions and listening. During the focus groups as I watched the participants relate to each other, I realized that I had the power to see and hear them. As with the in-depth interview, the focus group placed participants in an unequal relationship to me as the researcher. Participants were not looking at me; I was looking at them. Participants may have been evaluating my words; however, it was my evaluation of their words that would be made into print.

While participants may have been observing my body language as I was recording theirs, I had the power to evaluate that language for meaning. If participants posed questions of me, I discovered that I could easily hide behind the academic speech to which I had access, even though I did not. This became clear to me each time a participant asked what my study was about or why I was conducting this research. While I was always forthcoming and honest in my revelations about my research and myself, this realization suggested the extent to which the researcher/participant relationship is an unequal one and the tremendous power held by researchers.
A Critical Look at the Transcription Process

In August and September 2010, the data were professionally transcribed by a U.S. based company called GMR Transcription. I paid for transcription instead of manually transcribing the data myself. I wanted to focus my energies on the coding and analysis of the data, given the importance of these two phases of the research process for my overall dissertation. First, I reviewed each audio file and edited each transcript using the audio files for accuracy. Poland (2003) wrote that there are “a number of logistical and interpretive challenges to the translation of audiotape conversation into textual form” (p. 270). Some logistical challenges that I found in the transcript included improper use of quotation marks, omissions, and “mistaking words or phrases for others” (p. 268). I reviewed the audio files and verbatim transcripts several times to ensure that I could recall the content of each interview.

I made corrections to terms and phrases that the transcribers failed to comprehend. One such term was “B.Ed.” program, which was misspelled or mistaken for another term. Poland (2003) suggested that the verbatim transcript should not go unproblematized because of the difficulties inherent in trying to represent conversational speech in written form. “The transcript as text is frequently seen as unproblematic and given a privileged status in which its authority goes unquestioned,” he emphasized (p. 273). However, a verbatim transcript may not always capture nuances in communication between researcher and participant. These nonverbal or secret aspects of the interaction include nods, smiles or frowns, the physical space, and what participants wear. Further, he emphasized that aspects of speech, such as intonation of voice, pauses, sighs, and laughter, may not always be easily transcribed. Because of this, Poland (2003) indicated that the transcribed interview must be conceived of as a social construct:
The socially constructed nature of the research interview as a co-authored conversation-in-context must be acknowledged, instead of a quasi-positivist reification of the transcript as data about the interviewee, frozen in time (and space). As text, the transcript is also open to multitude alternative readings, as well as interpretations with every fresh reading. (Poland, 2003, p. 274)

After editing each transcript, I began the process of manually coding the data using Microsoft Word and Microsoft OneNote.

**Coding and Analyzing the Data**

grounded theory assists researchers in collecting and analyzing data, as well as in “obtaining additional focused data that inform, extend, and refine emerging analytical themes” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 312). According to Charmaz (2003), there are two forms of grounded theory: constructivist and objectivist. A constructivist approach to grounded theory “places priority on the phenomena of the study and sees both data and analysis as created from the shared experiences of the researcher and participants” (p. 313). This approach studies how participants make meaning; constructivist grounded theorists view data as a construction. This approach “locates the data in time, place, culture, and context” (p. 313). On the other hand, objectivist grounded theory sees the data as “real in-and-of themselves” (p. 313). The data are representative of “objective facts about a knowable world” and the researcher simply discovers the facts (p. 313). From this perspective, the researcher does not play a role in creating the research process but simply acts as a “conduit for the research process” (p. 313).

Charmaz (2003) explained that, in constructivist grounded theory, multiple realities exist, the data are a reflection of what is produced by both researchers and participants, and the researcher affects the world of participants. “The researcher aims to learn participants’ implicit meanings of their experiences to build a conceptual analysis of them. A
constructivist approach takes implicit meanings, experiential views, and grounded theory analyses as constructions of reality”, explained Charmaz (p. 314). Using this approach, my role as the researcher is never removed from the stories that a participant chooses to share. When I reflected upon the interviews, I recognized that there were instances where participants were keenly aware that I, and not someone else, was asking the questions. It was clear to me that in asking questions about race, some participants avoided verbalizing specific thoughts, changed the topic when they felt uncomfortable, or became somewhat incoherent, as found in Bonilla-Silva (2003). My identity as the researcher directly impacts that data that emerges in an interview context (Duster, 2000).

In addition to manually coding the data, I used Microsoft OneNote to assist with the organization of the data. This software was used to store each verbatim transcript and enabled me to manually place large amounts of data into thematic fields. However, the software was not used to analyze the data per se. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) noted that computer-assisted qualitative analysis is increasingly being used to analyze qualitative data; however, they explained that computer-based tools “are not ideologically neutral” (p. 353):

They structure the work of interpretation and presume a particular gendered stance toward the material world. They frequently impose a rational, hierarchical, linear or quasi-linear, and sequential framework on the world and its empirical materials. They can create the impression that meaningful patterns exist in the data, when in fact they are created by the software and analytic frameworks being used. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 353)

In the absence of a computer-based tool, human beings create this sense of order from the data. Similarly, Weitzman (2003) explained that, although computer programs are able to assist with analysis, it is the role of the researcher “to do what needs to be done” (p. 314). The software simply aids the researcher by providing the necessary tools to conduct the analysis.
Content analysis involves “identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labelling” the emergent patterns found in data (Patton, 2002, p. 463). After reviewing each audio file and correcting the verbatim transcript for errors, I printed each verbatim transcript and read through each, listing open codes in the margins and on each page. I created open codes while reading each transcript (Charmaz, 2003). Open codes were used to make “initial analytical decisions about the data” (p. 320). Charmaz (2003) suggested that initial or open codes assist the researcher in delineating the views of participants instead of assuming that the researcher and participants share the same views.

After coding all transcripts, I inserted open codes into Microsoft OneNote. In Microsoft Word, I labelled open codes using letters of the alphabet, starting with the letter A. For example, I labelled the code “place and inner city schools” as “A”; I labelled additional open codes until I arrived at the letter “Z.” When I arrived at a code that fell under the category of an open code, I added a number to the initial letter to indicate my narrowing of focus for that code. For example, the open code “inner city schools as racial space” was coded as “A-1.” The open code “inner city schools and gendered space” was labelled as “A-2.” In Microsoft Word, I also created a list of vertical codes for themes that appeared across transcripts. I coded vertical codes with numbers, for example, “19- male teachers as role models in inner city schools.” Beside each vertical code, I inserted the names of participants who discussed that particular topic. In addition to open and vertical codes, I created biographical codes that were meant to sketch a portrait of the lives of each participant.

I followed the open coding phase with focused coding, using each subsequent reading of the data. Focused codes are more abstract than open codes and assisted in the organization of the data (Charmaz, 2003). These codes are meant to be more “analytically incisive than many of the initial codes that they subsume” (p. 22). Charmaz (2003) stated that
focused codes cover more data and categorize the data in a more precise fashion. In this manner, focused codes set the stage for the next phase of analytical work. These codes often reflect recurring themes found across several interviews. Eventually categories can be developed using focused codes. These categories are then used to develop an analytical framework through the integration of the categories. I inserted focused codes into Microsoft OneNote and began to insert identified data across different transcript into the labelled files. For example, one focused code that emerged was the theme “classroom management” Eventually, the focused codes generated topics and subtopics for the chapters of the dissertation.

As opposed to creating a coding system that was based on themes generated by the research literature, I created open and focused codes based solely on the themes that emerged from the data to ensure that the data itself was the starting point for my analysis. I became concerned that imposing codes from the research literature might prevent me from “seeing” the stories that were unfolding in the data (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss, 1987). When using a constructivist approach, the researcher “studies the data before consulting the research literature, engages in line-by-line coding, uses active codes to describe what is happening in the data, and uses leads generated from the open codes to gather more data” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 320).

However, one of the challenges that I encountered in my attempt to avoid being influenced by the research literature was that, in preparing my dissertation proposal and for the ethics review process, I became familiar with the research literature that focused on several aspects of my topic. Charmaz (2003) warned that when the data is used as a guide, the researcher might be lead down unanticipated paths that often require a change in direction with respect to the topic being studied. In this research, because I used the data as
my guide, I returned to the research literature to examine issues of classroom management as well as issues of social class.

**Locating the Study**

The study takes place at a university campus located in a small city in the province of Ontario, Canada. Ontario is Canada’s most populated province and is home to the cities of Toronto and Ottawa, the nation’s capital. All interviews were held on the university campus, except for one, which took place in the city of Toronto. Data from this research does not identify the city and the TEP from which participants were chosen because of the relatively small size of the city itself. Census data from the 2006 census reveals that the city’s size is over 100,000. The low levels of racial diversity on the university campus outweigh the racial diversity reflected in the city itself, which is predominantly White.

Approximately 35.5% of the city’s residents live in apartment-style housing. With respect to education, 18% of residents have no certificate, diploma or degree; 21% of residents have earned a university degree. The city has an unemployment rate of 7% with most residents employed in the health care and sales and services industries. A business report released by a municipal organization of the city reports that in 2000, 44.2% of its residents earned less than $20,000 per year, which is below the LICO. All seven participants had field placements in schools that were located in the city. Earl, who graduated from the Concurrent program, was placed in several schools, some of which were located in the city of Toronto.

**The Research Participants**

What unifies this heterogeneous group of individuals is their difference which, in many ways, represents the Canadian story (Levine-Rasky, in conversation). The narratives of
each participant reveal aspects of education in Canada as each experienced it. The experiences of each participant are not intended to be the read as representing the experiences of all pre-service teachers. Each participant narrative reveals how that particular individual conceives of schools that serve low-income and minority students. Their collective experiences speak to the nuanced ways in which inner city schooling is shaped by discourse, power, and geography. As such, the narratives presented in this research cannot be objectified or quantified (James, 2010).

Goodson and Sikes (2001) stated that “lives have to be understood as lived within time and time experienced according to narrative” (p. 46). They warned that in telling the stories of lives, individuals choose to tell some stories at the expense of others. Goodson and Sikes (2001) explained “People may choose to emphasize certain experiences in order to support the impression they wish to project, the presentation they want to make” (p. 46). These stories shared by each participant relied on their use of memory. The researchers argued that “all stories are memory as all memories are stories” (p. 45). They explained that what is remembered often relates to how the memory fits into a particular story. This reliance on memory speaks to the particular meanings that each memory holds for individual participants.

I introduce the participants using aliases that they chose. In some cases, I chose the alias if I was asked to do so by the participant. In one case, I changed the alias chosen by the participant because the alias was similar to the participant’s actual name. During the focus group sessions, participants used their real names when speaking to each other. In some areas of the data that I used in this research, I chose not to include biographical details about a participant because its inclusion might identify the participant.
Introducing Earl

I met Earl in May 2010. Earl was tall with a friendly demeanour. He smiled easily and had a laid-back manner that made speaking to him a pleasant experience. Earl identified as a White male from a middle-class background. He grew up in a small city in Ontario and was the only child in a “tight knit family”. Earl explained that in many respects, he came from “a very sheltered upbringing.” When we met, Earl had just completed his Bachelor of Education degree. Prior to that, he spent four years in the concurrent program, which meant that he also graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Earl did not participate in the focus group session because of a full-time position that he had just begun in another field.

Introducing Andy

I drove to the city of Toronto to conduct the interview with Andy in May 2010. This was the only interview that took place away from the university campus. We decided ahead of time to meet at a local library that Andy chose. My first impression of Andy was that he was somewhat shy, but genuine. He was soft spoken as we tried to determine the best location in the library to conduct the interview. Because the library was busier than we both expected it to be, we made an impromptu decision to walk along Eglington Avenue West to find a suitable location. We finally decided upon an empty park bench at the busy intersection of Dufferin Street and Eglington Avenue. Andy identified as a White male from a working-class background. He grew up in the neighbourhood where we conducted the interview. Andy did not participate in any of the three focus groups because he was living in Toronto.
Introducing Bredz

I met Bredz for the first time in June 2010. She was confident in the way that she spoke, openly and without restraint. Bredz self-identified as White and often spoke of being raised in societal settings where she was the racial minority amongst racialized peoples. With respect to her own social class identity, Bredz remarked, “My parents were fortunate enough. Worked hard for what they had and I was able, I was provided with what I needed for schooling or sports.” I immediately felt a connection to Bredz, partly because we shared a cultural identity. Bredz admitted that she was not sure whether she wanted to pursue a teaching career. Bredz participated in each of the three focus group sessions.

Introducing Tara

I met Tara in June 2010. She self-identified as White and explained that she attended middle-to-upper-class schools. She shared with me that her “mother’s side was Asian”; however, she did not identify as biracial or of mixed-race identity. Mahtani (2002) explained that racial performance is available to women of mixed race because their racial identities do not fit into socially constructed racial categories:

Racial performance is one avenue open to some “mixed race” women because of the shifting ways they are racialized. Readings of their bodies are complex and multifaceted. Their racialized identities do not necessarily fit in socially constructed categories of race. Many “mixed race” women explained that their racial identity is defined differently over time and space because of the shifting spaces of racialization. (Mahtani, 2002, p. 429)

Tara was shy, soft-spoken, and had a wonderful smile. Tara participated in the first focus group session.
Introducing Tristan

I met Tristan in June 2010. When Tristan responded to my call for participants via email, he indicated that he had an interest in inner city schooling issues and wanted very much to be part of the study. He self identified as White. Tristan seemed to thrive on the intellectual exchange of the interview. He was confident in his speech and carefully thought about each question before responding. Tristan volunteered to be interviewed twice after I lost data from our first interview due to technical difficulties. Tristan participated in each of the three focus group sessions.

Introducing Madison

I met Madison for the first time in June 2010. Madison identified as being of “mixed race” identity (Mahtani, 2002), of African American and First Nations/Aboriginal ancestry. She identified as having a middle-class upbringing. Madison’s thorough response to my first individual interview question indicated to me that I would require follow up interviews with her, if she consented. Madison spoke fluent French. She worked in several careers prior to pursuing her Bachelor of Education degree and was the mother of two young children. In the body of this work, I have made a conscious effort to avoid using the term “single mother” because of the ways in which this coded term (Li, 2005) invites us to conceive of unwed mothers in problematic and value laden ways. At the time of my interview, she shared that she was going through a divorce. Madison participated in the first two focus groups and opted to be interviewed for the third group session. I conducted a total of three interviews with Madison.
Introducing Audrey

I met Audrey in June 2010. She self-identified as being of “mixed-race” identity (Mahtani, 2002). Her mother was White and her father was of First Nations/Aboriginal ancestry. During our interview, she often discussed the skin colour politics of being fair enough as to “not look Native.” At the time of our interview, she spoke openly about living in poverty and growing up in an impoverished home. In fact, Audrey discussed the social stigma that she experienced as a divorced mother and her movement from being middle-class to living in poverty after her divorce. Although she seemed at ease with me during the interview, I sensed that she was being somewhat reserved. Like Tristan and Madison, Audrey worked in previous careers before becoming certified to teach.

Reflections on Race of Interviewer Effects (ROIE) and the Interview Process

The stories told of research methodologies are filled with gaps and silences. Qualitative research is not simply an exercise in collecting data about research participants. It is a complex act that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described as multicultural and gendered. I argue this multicultural act is informed by issues of race, despite the tendency of dominant research texts to discuss issues of race only when they pertain to White researchers working with racialized participants. Issues of race are discussed even less when White researchers work with White participants (Duster, 2000). The research dilemmas that manifest themselves when racialized researchers work with White participants seem to be flagrantly absent from research methods texts.

The act of conducting research is also an exercise in power. Foucault (1990) wrote that power is always operating in all places and at all times. “There is no escaping from power...it is always—already present, constituting the very thing which one attempts to
counter it with.” (p. 82). Foucault (1990) explained that power is bearable because it is able to mask what it is, as “its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (p. 86). Within a North American context Blacks often occupy marginal status economically, politically, and socially (Collins, 2003). Collins (2003) wrote that this marginality creates a context whereby Black academics are often rendered outsiders within the academy. As I made my way through the data collection phase of this research project, I made problematic the complexities of power as it relates to my relationship to the research participants.

I asked myself such questions as:

- Do researchers *always* hold *more* power than the individuals that they study; if not, in what instances might they hold *less* power,

- Do Black researchers hold the same level of power in the research process as their White counterparts, and

- Do Black researchers with White participants negotiate power, given the currency of Whiteness within our culture? (Dyer, 1997; Giroux, 1997).

Once the interviews were underway, I began to observe the nuanced ways in which issues of race became a salient feature of my interaction with participants. I also considered what my open commitment to issues of race and gender might mean for my participants.

Power imbalances inherent in the in-depth interview occur for several reasons. First the interviewer is in a position of power because of her/his ability to ask questions (Briggs 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003), to analyze the words of participants, and to make meaning from those words. Research participants are unable to exercise power in the same way as interviewers, despite the fact that they are able to exercise power in various ways. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2003) such an exercise in power might include: withholding information that is important to the interviewer, demonstrating signs of
resistance during the interview in the form of body language, stopping the interview while it is being conducted, requesting that the researcher discard previously recorded information, and ultimately, filing a complaint with the researcher’s REB. In this way, participants are active agents throughout the entire research process and not simply passive vessels of knowledge.

The title of researcher, professor, Ph.D., and/or doctoral candidate bestows status upon researchers that places them in positions of authority and legitimacy (Briggs, 2003), depending on the social status of participants. However, I assert here that such status is not automatically conferred onto racialized researchers, and in particular, onto Black researchers. This is due to the various ways in which the Black researcher’s body is racially coded (Hall, 1997) and constructed within a particular social, political, and cultural context (Obidah, 2000; Twine, 2000). Here, I suggest that a researcher may not be automatically positioned as powerful in relation to less powerful participants, because a researcher is unable to shed her/his coded body during the research process.

I argue that power for the racialized researcher is negotiated and in a constant state of flux, instead of automatically given, depending on how the interview unfolds. Unlike the type of power that might be bestowed upon White researchers vis a vis White skin privilege, power for the racialized researcher is never automatic. One useful way of conceptualizing this is by looking at the experiences of women professors in university classrooms. Often, male students in university courses challenge what they perceive to be the power and authority conferred onto female professors (Luke, 1996; Ng, 1993). The researcher’s body can be read as racial text in much the same way that a teacher’s body or a professor’s body can be read as text.
According to Lewis (in conversation), the female academic’s body is always placed in a precarious situation because it is read as being too young, too old, too fat, too thin, and so on. In short, she explains that the female researcher’s body is never a perfect body. Chacon (2006) suggested that when the White male body is read as text, it emerges as both a rational and professional body. She explained that the female body and the racialized body have been marked as surplus visibility, unprofessional, and less intelligent in the academy (p. 38). This creates a sense in which the White male body becomes a body of belonging, of knowing, of theory, of study, and of research.

University students come to expect that the White male body will not only lead university classrooms, but will also conduct scholarly research. I could not help but notice the surprise on the face of several participants when they first met me. While their surprise can be read in multiple ways, given the low numbers of Black professors in Canadian universities (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001), I read their surprise as having to do with my racial identity, my gender, and my age, and my presence in a predominantly White city. However, I cannot verify this hunch since participants did not openly verbalize their surprise.

In Canada, James (2001) and Wane (2002) discussed the particular ways in which their authority and legitimacy as Black professors are questioned by students. Wane (2002) explained that this questioning occurs whether the students are Black or White, which speaks to the ubiquity of Whiteness in the academy and to the power of hegemony to alter the lens through which both racialized and White students come to think about who belongs in the academy. James (2001) wrote that if students associate Blackness with inferiority and criminality, it would be difficult for them to overcome these negative perceptions of Black professors in the university. I extend James’ (2001) argument to the research process and Black researchers. He explained that some students expressed anger and surprise by his
presence in the classroom. One student enrolled in his course wrote, “I was …surprised when I later found out that Carl has a Ph.D. in Sociology. Somehow, that did not fit my stereotype of a Black person especially from the Caribbean” (p. 151). Another student confessed:

My initial opinions of Carl were negative…his Black skin “surprised” me… [and] his accent annoyed me. The idea of having a Black teacher quite intrigued me, but having to cope with a poorly educated Black teacher seemed to be asking a lot. (James, 2001, p. 151)

James (2001) emphasized further that if students associate Blackness with “lower levels of education,” “welfare,” and “crime,” it will be difficult for both dominant and racialized students to separate these negative associations from their perceptions of a Black professor (p. 151) and by extension, a Black researcher:

Upon entering the classroom, all teachers are subjected to evaluations based on students’ personal experiences with teachers. These evaluations will also be a result of assumptions and stereotypes based on such things as a teacher’s dress, sex, accent, voice, social class, and race. If students associate Black people with a lower social class, and concomitantly lower levels of education, and with welfare and crime, these associations will influence how they perceive a Black teacher. (James, 2001, p. 151)

What is interesting to note about the students’ narratives is the association that the second student makes between the professor’s Black skin and the assumption that he is poorly educated.

During the focus group session when I asked participants to share how they learned about issues of race, Madison and Bredz each discuss race by using the term “nigger.”

Anita: If you could describe what race is, what would you say?

Madison: Interesting, huh. That’s interesting because you’ve brought… I’ve got sorta two stories in my head, and how did I learn about race? You learn that [about race] with stories, with people telling you stories. I remember knowing that my Aunt Peggy, um, was the one who looked the most Native [Aboriginal/First Nations] on my dad’s side. And she was the most racist and she was prejudiced. And that often times, if you’re passing [assuming another racial identity in one’s daily life] the one who then is having the hardest time passing, has to work harder at it. Um, I remember one of the stories growing up that, uh…an Italian family moved into
Scarborough, where my mum’s family was living, and the Italian kid went out and called one of her brothers a “nigger.” And my… maybe it was my grandfather, whatever, went up [to the child’s father] and said, “This is what happened” and the… the Italian father got mad. He picked his Black, curly-haired son, with olive skin, put him up in the mirror and said, “Look at yourself in the mirror. Do you think any of these Canadians aren’t gonna call you a ‘nigger’ too?”

I was taken aback by Madison’s open use of the term. While she mentioned that we learn about race through stories, which I found to be a useful way to think about race, given that race must be understood as a discursive category, I was unprepared for its use.

In the weeks following the focus group session, I found myself trying to make sense of its use, first by Madison and then as a follow up to Madison’s comment by Bredz. Bredz explained to the group that she often struggles with the use of the term Black to describe peoples of African descent in Canada. The questions I asked myself following the incident had much to do with my racial identity and the research process itself. Such questions included (a) why did Madison (mixed-race) and Bredz (White) use the term, and not Tristan (White) and Audrey (mixed-race), (b) why didn’t I seize that opportunity and respond to their use of the term, perhaps enabling the other participants to share their thoughts, (c) to what extent was I attempting to protect Tristan and Audrey, and (d) to what extent was I attempting to protect myself from a conversation that could have taken me further out of my comfort zone?

My ethics review board (REB) ensured that my participants were protected from any trauma that they may have experienced as a result of my questions about race. Asking questions places the researcher in a position of power relative to participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The assumption operating here is that the researcher, as the person asking the questions, should be prepared for any emotional issues that may arise from the research process. A further assumption being made is that the researcher is less vulnerable than participants, if at all. I am suggesting here that researchers can be placed in vulnerable
situations in a research context when their racial identities are called into question. It is possible for researchers to experience what I have come to call race-of-interviewer trauma (ROIT).

Race-of-interviewer trauma (ROIT) describes any situation in the research process that causes emotional pain or anguish for a researcher because of her/his racial identity. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2010) trauma includes frightening thoughts and painful feelings as the mind responds to serious injury. Both racialized and White researchers, depending on the research situation, can experience race-of-interviewer trauma (ROIT). Here, I will discuss ROIT as it pertains to racialized researchers, with the realization that racialized researchers may not always experience ROIT simply because they are raced.

Race of interviewer trauma (ROIT) is an event occurring during the research process that causes a negative emotional reaction on the part of the researcher, specifically because of the researcher’s race. The researcher may experience feelings of confusion, anger, rejection, fear, or doubt resulting from this race-based event. I dealt with the feelings of doubt and confusion. I also dealt with feelings of shame because the term “nigger” has a long history of being used to inflict pain upon peoples of African descent. While the research literature discusses negative emotions experienced by racialized researcher that call their race into question (Maylor, 2009; Twine, 2000) this experience has not been assigned a name.

Twine’s (2000) ethnographic research on race in Brazil is a salient example of ROIT. Twine (2000) explained that in Brazil, she experienced racism as a routine aspect of her work as a researcher. Twine assumed that she had more in common with African Brazilians than she experienced. She wrote that, more than anything else, the racism that she experienced by African Brazilians was unexpected. In addition, she was surprised by their assumption that
she was a “maid, the illegitimate sister of [her] White partner, or his whore” (p. 3). This is an illustration of ROIT. In the Brazilian socio-political context, her Blackness was read in multiple and complex ways that she did not anticipate. This contributed to her feelings of trauma.

Similarly Maylor (2009), a Black researcher in Britain discussed experiences of racism by a school administrator while conducting research with colleagues. She explained that despite being treated with respect while speaking with the administrator on the telephone, once she arrived at the elementary school to begin her research, the administrator failed to acknowledge her presence upon discovering her Blackness. Maylor (2009) noticed that the administrator spoke only to her White colleague, but refused to address her. When Maylor (2009) discussed her experience at the school with her colleague, her colleague denied that race was indeed a factor. The denial of race by Maylor’s colleague made her question whether she had a “chip” on her shoulder (p. 56).

Maylor’s experience is another example of ROIT because, in this case, the researcher experiences racism as a function of the work that she must do and this negative experience creates negative emotions surrounding the research process itself:

I spent a whole week questioning whether I had misinterpreted the deputy head’s body language and non-verbal communication towards me wrongly, but on a subsequent visit to the school to conduct further research eye contact and communication was again only maintained with my White colleague. This left me in no doubt that this deputy head teacher found it difficult to acknowledge and interact with Black people in authority. Inwardly, I challenged this deputy’s inbuilt prejudice and fixed stereotypes of what it is possible for Black people to do, but failed to vocalise it. It would seem that I was rendered invisible three times; first by the deputy’s lack of recognition of me, secondly, by my own silence and failure to verbalise my deep sense of hurt, and thirdly, by my colleague’s lack of recognition of the deputy head’s exclusionary tactics. I had naïvely expected my colleague to have an awareness of racism, but her lack of awareness left me feeling unsupported in a racist environment. (Maylor, 2009, p. 56)
Further, because Maylor (2010) had only just begun to conduct research at the school when the racist incident happened, she ran the risk of having the trauma repeated. She knew that she had to return to a research site where she might have to endure more racist behaviour, and might have to confront the administrator who occupied a position of power and authority at the school. This left her in a racial double bind, about which the research literature rarely speaks. The act of conducting research created an opportunity for me to reflect upon my role as a researcher. It enabled me to reflect upon assumptions that I had previously held about power and the status of researchers. In chapter four, I explore participant conceptions of geographies of inner city and urban schooling in Canada.
Chapter Four

Participant Narratives of the Geographies of Canadian Inner City Schools

Introduction

Reversing decline in our inner city schools (*Montreal Gazette*, 2004)

Inner city schools can be conceived of as cultural myths. As mythical, the inner city school is often depicted in television and film. As a cultural myth which creates the discursive practices that present situations as “given” (Britzman, 1991), inner city schools can be conceived of as “known” spaces (Collins & Coleman 2008), even if individuals lack direct experiences with them. This knowing occurs at the hand of discourse surrounding inner city schooling. Readings of inner city schools as schools in decline, as revealed by the opening quote above, contribute to the myth-making about such schooling spaces. The headline presents inner city schools as belonging to everyone with its use of the term “our.” Yet, even in this belonging, common sense understandings of such schools suggest that these are schooling spaces that are unproductive, as the term “decline” implies. This discourse of decline implicates particular bodies that become naturalized in this space. In England, Reay (2007) asserted that both inner city comprehensives and inner city students “are seen to be irredeemably working class within wider social imaginaries” (p. 1193). The discourse surrounding inner city schooling calls into question not only the issues of social class, but also the intersections of social class with race, gender, and geography.
In this chapter, I contend that as a cultural myth, the inner city school spatially emerges as a particular brand of schooling that deviates from what normally occurs in school, namely learning. This deviation is integral to understanding the types of teachers who are attracted to, and fearful of (Groulx, 2001; Picower, 2009) teaching in schools that serve low-income and minority students. Constructions of the inner city school and the corresponding pedagogies that are seen as required in such spaces are inextricably linked to notions of place.

Collins and Coleman (2008) noted that schools play a major role in the geographies of children, young people, and family life. Theorizing from a social geography perspective, the researchers explained that schools help to shape social identities. Because of these functions, schools are places of “social and political significance” (p. 281). They are spaces with which people are familiar. Children spend much of their time in schools and parents often organize their time around the workings of the school day. Schools are also spaces that not only provide children with knowledge, but also help to shape their identities. Collins and Coleman (2008) suggested that these factors create a sense in which schools can be conceived of as common places. Despite the important functions that schools hold, the researchers argue that schools have received less attention than hospitals and clinics with respect to geographic space. The researchers indicated that schools reflect the “broader social characteristics of their neighbourhoods” even as they play a role in shaping these neighbourhoods (p. 281). They suggested that schools can be conceived of distinct geographical spaces:

The school is a place—a bounded portion of geographical space within which certain rules apply and particular activities occur. Schools are highly specialized environments, which (temporarily) isolate and segregate children from wider social and spatial contexts, in order that they might be simultaneously protected from, and prepared for, adult life. Accordingly, schools have much in common with other institutional geographies—such as those associated with the prison, the hospital and
the asylum - in which isolation from mainstream social life is a central organizing concept. (Collins & Coleman, 2008, p. 283)

Collins and Coleman (2008) emphasized that in addition to producing knowledge, schools shape behaviour and inform the future opportunities that are available to students.

This dissertation seeks to expand on this notion of the school as a distinct geographic space by paying attention to new teacher conceptions of teaching in Canadian schools that serve low-income and minority students. In this chapter, I present findings on participant conceptions of the location of Canadian inner city schools and the neighbourhoods in which these schools are located. The chapter then explores the surprise expressed by participants that inner city schools could be found in small Canadian cities and in Canada as a whole. The chapter concludes with participant narratives about the carceral or jail-like feel of American inner city schools constructed largely via film. Although I question the use of the term “inner city” in this dissertation, I use the term in the chapters that follow, especially in relation to the research question being asked and participant responses to those questions. I employ the term more so in this context because of my belief that its use in the question being asked is important for how participants understand and respond to its usage.

Participant Perceptions of the Location of Canadian Inner City Schools

Participants were asked: “Geographically, where do you think a Canadian inner city school might be located? So, I’m thinking cities, towns, provinces, anything that you can think about?” Participants generally suggested that inner city schools were located in large Canadian cities, despite an operational definition of the inner city school that does not confine such schools to urban spaces. Madison explained that the inner city school could be found in “anything that could be classified as a city,” while for Audrey, the inner city school might be found in a “city with public transit.” Andy, who discussed growing up in a working
class neighbourhood in Toronto, suggested that an inner city school might be located anywhere in Canada, as he paid attention to the working definition of inner city schools being used. He explained that inner city schools could also be found in working-class neighbourhoods, lower SES neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods with “parents living below the poverty line.”

On a local level, participants described inner city schools as located in densely populated areas of large cities. Other responses included the location of inner city school in areas that were depressed, and in “areas where industry might have left.” These responses suggest that participants mapped such schools onto large cities, but also in economically depressed neighbourhoods. Daniel (2010) explained that urban neighbourhoods in Canada do not always show signs of urban decay as is often depicted in popular media. She stated that American visitors are surprised by urban spaces in Canada because these spaces, “though in some state of disrepair, [are] relatively clean and ordered” (p. 827).

The data revealed that nationally, participants mapped inner city schools onto cities such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Surrey, and Hamilton. Madison identified Sharbot Lake, a rural town in Ontario, as the location of inner city schools. It is also interesting that she described inner city schools located in small Canadian cities as “suburban schools with inner city issues.”

Anita: So when you picture the neighbourhood surrounding a Canadian inner city school, what do you see?

Madison: I can really only speak to Toronto and Hamilton. I haven’t been to the inner city schools in the X city area as much. I’ve been to high schools in the X city area and when I’m in X city, the areas look more suburban. The inner city schools vary greatly in Toronto. You have the inner city schools in the city of Toronto. They tend to be very old in architecture in the old city of Toronto. The houses are very close to each other and you know I think, yet it’s not necessarily… the whole area is cool, I think Central Tech is a good indicator for that. We have the university community bordering onto it. Like, it’s still a very difficult school to go to. Yet if you go out to North York or to Scarborough, those inner city schools are suburban
schools with inner city issues. So that being said, I think you can find inner city issues at any type of school. Now to go on to that point, given your definition of poverty level, I would say that Sharbot Lake could almost fall as an inner city school; in as much that… people are in a very rural area… and I’d probably find that their incomes are quite similar [to low income areas in large cities] and that some of the outcomes at school were also similar.

Madison’s assertion that this rural community could be defined as inner city reflects one of the few responses that situated the inner city school in a rural area. Her narrative lends credence to the fact that, the Canadian context is a complex one for strict definitions of the inner city as a particular place. This is because schools that are located away from large urban centres also serve low-income and minority students. Similarly, Audrey described a small community in Northern Manitoba, a school with a high First Nation/Aboriginal student population, as being the site of inner city schools. Both Madison and Audrey had experiences teaching in such schools that could also be described as rural schools.

Nationally, participant narratives located inner city schools in cities with high immigrant and racialized populations. Participants did not locate such schools in the Eastern regions of Canada, such as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, or Newfoundland and Labrador, nor did they situate the inner city school in western regions of the country such as Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. Neither did they identify Canada’s three territories of Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Participants also failed to identify the city of Winnipeg as a site of inner city schools. Winnipeg is home to a large First Nations/Aboriginal population. School boards in this region have a long history of working toward ensuring that First Nations/Aboriginal students receive equitable forms of education (Levin et al., 2007). That they did not mention the location of schools in this region suggests the extent to which they associated issues of poverty with racialized and immigrant communities, as opposed to First Nations/Aboriginal communities in Canada, among others.
Participants tended to cite cities and province where new immigrants to Canada most often settle, suggesting that they linked poverty to areas of new immigrant settlement.

Another way in which this finding can be conceptualized is that poverty was rarely associated with areas other than Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver that receive less new immigrants. Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver have the largest racialized population in Canada. Statistics Canada (2011) reported that 45% of racialized Canadians live in Toronto, followed by 18% in Vancouver, and 11% in Montreal (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Due to the high numbers of racialized immigrants in Canada and to an increasing racialization of poverty, I argue that in this context these cities can be read as coded terms for race (Li, 2005). Because 75% of Canadian immigrants are racialized (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005), the association between the inner city school and immigrant settlement can also be read as a racial one. Although it was never explicitly articulated, the data revealed a clear association between inner city schools and racialized cities. By mapping the inner city school onto the cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, the inner city schools become a space that is attended by racialized and immigrant students.

**Participant Perceptions of Canadian Inner City Neighbourhoods**

Participants were asked, “when you picture the neighbourhood surrounding an inner city school, what do you see?” On the one end of the spectrum, Earl explained that an inner city school might be located in an urban neighbourhood, “surrounded by homes or apartment buildings.” In the neighbourhood, you might see “lots of brick,” “concrete,” “not much greenery,” “probably graffiti and not the cleanest neighbourhood,” and “just litter and things like that.” For this new teacher, “the buildings and the school itself may not be in the
best of repair.” Bredz described her first impression of an inner city neighbourhood based on her field placement:

Anita: Okay, so we talked about the neighbourhood. So describe, can you describe the neighbourhood a little bit?

Bredz: It was in a residential area. Too many houses were not, they were not mansions, but, you know they were shacks, you know. Um, perhaps some of them were a little more, kind of hoarded, you know. There was too much stuff in the yard or whatever it was; in terms of maintenance or what not. But you know, there was a Mini Mart [convenience store] on the corner. There was a school that had a playground. There wasn't any park to say...with any benches or any nice picnic grounds. Or any lovely fruit trees or any of that. No, there was none of that. There was just enough for, you know... they had, I think all we can say [inaudible] school grounds, in terms of playing and space and what not. And there was a bus route, you know. People got...there was access [to the bus] And it wasn’t too far from the X Center, where you have ice skating. It wasn’t too far from the community center, where the kids could swim.

Bredz also explains a sense in which the inner city school of her field placement was located in a residential area. Both Earl and Bredz discuss the inner city neighbourhood as one that lacks space, which confirms findings in Hampton et al. (2008). In Earl’s narrative, references to concrete, brick, a lack of greenery, and graffiti conjure images of an “urban jungle” (Daniel, 2010) often depicted in popular films and music videos about urban and inner city life. Yet, even though Bredz describes the school as being located in a residential neighbourhood, there is a sense in which space is lacking. Bredz’ narrative also describes the neighbourhood as lacking green space, fruit trees and playgrounds, creating a sense in which this space is void of aesthetic beauty. Based on her narrative alone, this residential inner city space is aesthetically unappealing.

Duncan and Duncan (2006) argued that landscapes reflecting nature are often associated with wealth and power. They wrote, “Landscapes, especially those with pleasing views, become possessions for those with wealth and power to control them; thus aesthetic
appreciation of residential landscapes is an issue that preoccupies primarily the affluent” (2006, p. 160). The lens through which this inner city space is read is one of deficit.

Audrey shares that her conceptions of the neighbourhood surrounding an inner city school changed once she became an adult. She explained that as a child, she did not know that she attended an inner city school because neither her parents nor the teachers used the term inner city when describing the school that she attended or the community that she lived in. She explained that, since having her own children, she sees inner city neighbourhoods with new eyes:

Anita: When you picture the neighbourhood surrounding an inner city school, what do you see?”

Audrey: What do I see? I look at it with different eyes of a…uh, as a child having grown up in an inner city school area and as an adult having had my own children attend these schools. As a child, it was just home; everyone’s houses were the same. They were literally, like, cookie cutter houses… as an adult having to return to an inner-city environment, it was hard to place my children into a different environment where there’s smaller yards, there’s less access to safe play areas… um, it’s more… I don’t want to say industrialized, but maybe commercialized, like, there’s more stores.

It is clear that her analysis of inner city spaces is not fixed, but depends on time and place. Her narrative also reveals a sense in which inner city spaces mean a reduction in space with her description of “smaller yards.” However, she introduces issues of safety when she discussed having “less access to safe play areas.” Audrey’s narrative contributes to a sense in which the inner city school is located in cramped spaces that less safe. Although some inner city schooling spaces may fit these descriptions, the suburban location of some inner city schools suggests that the neighbourhoods surrounding these schools are not always aesthetically unappealing or lacking in space. Participant perceptions have meaning because the places where inner city schools are imagined to be inform the types of teaching, learning, and pedagogy that are imagined to take place in such places (James, 2010).
An inner city neighbourhood lacking nature is one type of narrative about inner city schooling compared to a neighbourhood surrounded by nature. An inner city neighbourhood that is seen as cramped, with less access to safe areas, also informs the pedagogy of the school because the school cannot be removed from its neighbourhood. In this way, a reading of the inner city neighbourhood itself, when read as text, reveals much about what is possible as well as what is not possible, with respect to pedagogy. For example, schools that are seen as located in unsafe neighbourhoods have meaning for the extent to which teachers and students can engage in outdoor learning on school grounds.

Spaces that are seen to be unsafe mean that the school building itself becomes the only safe area for students and teachers. This is compared to schooling spaces where the grounds surrounding a school are seen as an extension of the actual physical space of the school. In such spaces, learning is conceptualized as taking place beyond the confines of the building. Learning extends through the school and can continue out into the community. Such a conceptualization of schooling space impacts the willingness of teachers to use outdoor spaces as pedagogical platforms. Ultimately, this affects the variety of learning tasks that inner city students might be exposed to, compared to those of students who learn in spaces where the neighbourhood surrounding the school is seen as being an extension of the classroom.

The Surprise of Inner City Schools in Small Canadian Cities and in Canada

Several participants discussed a sense of surprise that schools that serve low-income and minority students could be located in small Canadian cities. Tristan also expressed surprise that Canada was the home of schools with students living in financial need. I discuss this element of surprise by citing McKittrick (2006) who theorized that issues of race in
Canada are often discussed using a discourse of surprise. According to McKittrick (2006), this discourse of surprise suggests that issues of race are expected to exist in some other place, but not in Canada. She argued that this discourse of surprise displaces issues of race onto the Caribbean or to the United States. I employ her notion of surprise when participants articulate taken-for-granted assumptions about race. A discourse of surprise only makes sense when what is surprising, in this case the presence of the inner city school, is conceived of as being racially “out of place” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). As racially out of place, this discourse of surprise is the accepted term for the “not-said” (Foucault, 1972, p. 25). In the narrative below, Tara explains her surprise that high levels of poverty could be found in small cities:

Anita: Okay, so geographically, where do you think a Canadian inner city school might be located?

Tara: In a city, normally, I would say…in lower income areas. Um, yeah, the more rundown areas I guess, of the city…if that makes sense. Um…I would, I am shocked that I feel, like, in X city, they have …you know…what I would consider…I guess inner city or low income. I mean, really surprised. Because I guess…I thought that, like, because X city is a fairly small city. I guess I also assume that it’s usually bigger cities…you know, that have more low income families or whatever in them.

Tara’s narrative reveals that for her, poverty is something that families in large metropolitan areas experience. As I mentioned earlier, a race-based lens can be applied to her narrative because the small city that Tara speaks of is predominantly White. Her narrative, when read as text, reveals that poverty is not expected to be in small cities because often, such cities lack racial diversity.

The Surprise of White Poverty in Inner City Schools

Toward the end of my interview with Tara, I asked her how the interview itself changed her conceptions of inner city schools. She shared her surprise that the inner city
school where she was placed on her field placement was “mainly White”. She discussed the assumptions that she made that inner city schools would reflect more racial diversity that what she had observed. She makes a link between the lack of racial diversity at the school with the lack of racial diversity of the city:

Anita: Is there anything that you thought about today that may not have occurred to you before about inner city schools?

Tara: I guess I always assumed it [inner city schools] would be more racially mixed. And looking at X School it’s mainly, like, White, Caucasian, like that. So that surprises me. But I think that also might be kind of X City in general…like [the city] is not necessarily a very racially mixed town. So I think it’s more, I feel, anyway walking around [the school] is more representative of how the town is, or city, whatever. Yeah, so that’s, in terms of X School, surprises me.

Her narrative reveals that the absence of racialized bodies in the school, despite a lack of racialized presence in the city as a whole, is surprising. Tara’s surprise has to do with the White bodies that were evident at the inner city school where she was placed. She states, “I guess I always assumed that it would be more racially mixed.” Her assumption of race, mapped against the absence of racialized bodies on her field placement, creates cognitive dissonance. Her witnessing is surprising precisely because she reads racialized bodies, and not White ones, as sites of poverty. Her expectation that low-income schools are racially diverse schools is another way of saying that she expects poverty to be a function of the lives of racialized students, instead of a function of the lives of White ones.

In this context, I read Tara’s use of the term mixed as a racially coded term that suggests the presence of racialized students. Her narrative reveals her association between racialized bodies and low-income status. Tara’s sense of surprise also works to mark racialized bodies that are middle-class or affluent as unexpected. These bodies are unexpected because racialized bodies are often mapped onto spaces such as the inner city school. In this context, Tara equates race with social class. The White body becomes a body
of privilege in the same way that the racialized body becomes a body of poverty. Her surprise also involves her discovery that Whites students do, in fact, live in poverty. This speaks not only to the variability of Whiteness but also to the power of Whiteness to construct itself as the site of privilege (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Tara’s surprise has to do with the existence of poverty in the absence of racialized peoples, suggesting the extent to which issues of race, social class, and place interweave in the conceptual framework that she applies to difference.

In the same vein, Tristan admitted to being surprised by the existence of poverty in Canada. He confided, “I was prepared to see people, as you say, living in poverty et cetera, living in other places of the world, but I actually wasn’t prepared for some of the things that I saw in Canada”. I asked Tristan to recall his first awareness of the existence of inner city schools in Canada:

Anita: So do you know when you first became aware of the existence of inner city schools?

Tristan: I think I got a pretty good experience on the way that some people in the rest of the world lived and at first it startled me and over a time it was a motivator to try to do things to help that. I think during my practicum during the B. Ed. program, I taught in City 1 and City 2 and I’ve also been volunteering with X Agency and one of the things that I think caught me off guard… I was prepared to see people, as you say living in poverty et cetera, living in other places of the world, but I actually wasn’t prepared for some of the things that I saw in Canada. Teaching at the X Program in X City was one of those ones where I saw people that either were or had lived on the street. I met present and past drug addicts, people who were 50 years old trying to get through Grade 10. And I guess I was… I’d been naive to that part of the world.

Tristan’s preparation for the existence of poverty elsewhere in the world is tied to an image of Canada as a wealthy, industrialized, peace-keeping nation (Razack, 2004) that provides aid to Others. The act of bringing humanitarian aid to Other countries places Canada in a particular position with respect to issues of poverty. Common sense understandings would suggest that if Canada is providing aid to others, the needs of its own citizens are met. This
contributes to Tristan’s surprise about the profound needs that he witnessed on this field placement.

The surprise of inner city schools in small Canadian cities, the surprise of White inner city students, and the surprise of inner city schools in the Canadian nation reflect a sense in which issues of poverty are conceptually assigned to certain spaces and places, and onto certain bodies. In the case of Tara and Tristan, poverty resides in large cities, with racialized bodies, and in Other countries. For these two new teachers the witnessing of poverty in a small, Canadian city, and the attendance of predominantly White students at an inner city school is unexpected. I argue that such common sense understandings must be made problematic. These new teachers must reshape and rethink their preconceived notions about social class in Canada. Their sense of surprise can be felt at the level of pedagogy because this discourse of surprise could signal a lack of preparedness for some of the social realities reflected in Ontario schools.

**Perceived Differences between Canadian and American inner city schools**

When I asked Tara to explain any perceived differences between Canadian and American inner city schools, she explained that for her, inner city schools in the U.S. would be “worse.” She explained that what we classify as inner city in Canada would not be classified as inner city in the United States:

Anita: All right, and in your mind, what do you think the difference might be between a Canadian versus an American inner city school?

Tara: I would think that it would be worse in America. Like, I would…from driving through, and I don’t remember when we were driving through. But I remember driving through…we were, who knows where we were going, but…and seeing some little houses. And it was…they were literally shacks. Like, it was just…and I’ve never seen that [level of poverty] in Canada. And that was the first time there that I was, like, ‘Oh, my God’. Like, this is…the poverty is different…in Canada and the States, I feel. So I feel that in the States it would be worse. Like, the things that I guess I’m
considering, like, inner city school here would not be considered an inner city school there.

With respect to place, Tara explains that the “shacks” that she witnessed in the United States did not exist to the same degree in Canada. However, Tara fails to recognize that perhaps in Canada, poverty is more camouflaged, even though the debilitating effects of poverty impact the lives of low-income families, regardless of where in this world the poverty is experienced. She also fails to make connections between her own middle-to-upper class upbringing and the lens that this upbringing might provide in her ability to assess degrees of poverty.

Participant perceptions of U.S. inner city schools as jail-like.

Both Tara and Audrey discussed their perceptions that American inner city schools are carceral or jail-like, as found in research by Hampton et al. (2008). This spatial association between the inner city school and the prison has serious consequences for what is pedagogically imagined to occur in a space that is associated with criminality and the criminalization of particular bodies. Tara gained her perceptions through a trip to a school in New York City. She explained that she did not consider this school to be located in a “bad neighbourhood.” Yet she shared the sense in which the turn stalls, metal detectors, and the constant surveillance via the school’s use of security guards at each entryway contributed to this feeling of being imprisoned in the school:

Tara: And one of the schools that I went to… and it was…ended up, like, the kids were just practicing there. And it was a high school. But… and I didn’t feel like it was in a bad neighbourhood. You know, like, I looked around and I was, like, “Okay, like, this neighbourhood, for New York, seemed fairly clean.” Like, fairly…it didn’t seem…like, I knew, it’s not in the Upper Westside or Upper Eastside where…I had also gone to those…one of those schools, and that was, like, you…it was a very different experience to be on, like, the Upper Westside … in a Montessori school. And this school and you walk in, and they had security guards in the school, which really threw me. And then they had all the metal detectors…as well in the school…which, I don’t see that in Canadian schools. Versus…and that school, I didn’t feel it was in a terrible neighbourhood, so, I feel, like, if I went to one of those
really bad neighbourhoods, it would be...and they had security guards at every single door and they... at least that I...all the doors that we went through to kind of get through to this auditorium. And they had...yeah, the metal checkers for your purses or backpacks, whatever.

An analysis of Tara’s narrative reveals her sense that the Canadian inner city school lacks the severe security measures that she experienced at an American school. She shares that the presence of security guards “threw” her and that Canadian schools do not have metal detectors. The fact that the school was equipped with these carceral measures, even though it was perceived as one that was located in a relatively safe neighbourhood, speaks to what Tara perceives to be the need for safety measures in American schools.

Audrey made similar comments about the carceral feel of American inner schools. She shared that, although she had never personally experienced American inner city schools, popular media helped to construct such schools as jail-like:

Anita: All right, and in your mind, what do you think the difference might be between a Canadian versus an American inner city school?

Audrey: That’s a difficult question because I’ve never seen an American school myself, firsthand. I only see what the media has shown, and uh, they seem more, uh, aggressive…and I think there’s more of a stigma attached to those schools. I don’t know about the programs that they offer; I really don’t, but the inner-city school that my children have attended in Ottawa, it was just as nice as... like, the building’s just as nice, the play structures are just as nice, the teachers were just as happy to be there as...but it seems, as you watch the television with the American schools, they seem to just...it seems like the teachers are, like, just don’t want to be there...And the security is what frightens me. There’s this aspect that if you’re in poverty, living in poverty, that you’re somehow more prone to violence, and I don’t understand that. Well, when my children go to school, there’s not a security guard. They don’t have to pass through metal detectors. The teachers provide enough of the security. And then, in the States in some of the schools they have armed guards and they lock the doors. It’s not supposed to be prison.

Audrey describes American inner city schools using references such as “aggressive” and “more prone to violence.” She explains that her conceptions are based solely on media representations of such schools. Audrey contrasts an inner city school in the Ottawa area, which she describes as “just as nice” with teachers who are “just as happy to be there,” to the
depiction of inner city schools in popular film and television. Audrey notices that the popular narrative of school films suggests that if you are impoverished, you are “somehow more prone to violence.” She shares that in taking her own children to an inner city school in Canada, she does not have to go through security checks and metal detectors because the “teachers provide enough security.” In film, the spatial depiction of inner city schools as places with “armed guards” and “locked doors” works to create this “jail-like” feel. Audrey’s sharing that these images “frighten” her revealed a sense that such popular images remain with teachers long after these films are viewed.

Madison provided an alternative narrative and suggested that, with respect to issues of danger, one cannot compare an American inner city school to a Canadian one because of the availability of guns in American culture:

Anita: So in your mind do you think there’s a difference between Canadian versus American inner city schools?

Madison: My mom’s family comes from the United States and one of the things that… the family stories that we’ve grown up with was just that, there are different levels of danger that happen in society [American] where weapons are commonplace. So you really don’t have the same type of level of weapons in the inner city schools in Canada that you would have in the United States. You’re also dealing with generations of a system of inequalities so you have different racial attitudes. An inner city school in Toronto cannot be compared to an inner city in Louisiana. There’s just no way, you can’t compare the disparities.

I cite Madison’s narrative because the research literature indicates that issues of safety and security are frequently mentioned in U.S. pre-service teacher rationalizations of their fear of teaching in inner city spaces. This fear, as mentioned in Audrey’s narrative, may speak to a U.S. context. However, given the ubiquity of media depictions of inner city spaces, I question whether this sense of fear can inform a teacher’s conception of inner city schools in Canada.
Film media often constructs U.S. inner city schools as carceral spaces. By carceral, I mean to suggest that the images of schools in such films project the use of prison-like security measures that are used to control and monitor inner city students and to protect students, once inside, from the “danger” that lurks within the inner city community of the school itself. Shabazz (2009) spoke to the ways in which Black masculinities are expressed using carceral imagery in the United States and South Africa. He theorized that like race, gender, and social class, space is “a central fundament of subject formation” (p. 277). The spatial geographies of poor and working-class Black males, before they enter prisons, are informed by carceral techniques such as surveillance, policing, and containment in the “projects” where they live (p. 277). Shabazz (2009) argued that these carceral techniques create the conditions for Black males to be “prepared for prison” (p. 277). I cite Shabazz (2009) to argue that these same prison-like techniques, as witnessed by Tara and observed by Audrey via popular media, work to construct the U.S. inner city schools as dangerous space, criminal space, criminally Black space, and criminally Black male space.

The fact that Tara was forced to walk through metal detectors to get from one end of the school to an auditorium is a form of surveillance. The fact that these metal detectors were set up at each entry way of the school indicates that there is no area of the school where students are free from surveillance. Foucault (1972) theorized that panopticism was a technological invention used to survey individuals in various institutions, including schools:

Panopticism was a technological invention in the order of power, comparable with the steam engine in the order of production. This invention had the peculiarity of being utilized first of all on a local level, in school, barracks and hospitals. This was where the experiment of integral surveillance was carried out. (Foucault, 1972, p. 71)

This sense of surveillance, which enables the powerful to see everyone and at all times, is key to exercising power and control. Further, film images of inner city schools as having locked doors and being equipped with security guards, casts the inner city school as a space where
students, as “dangerous,” must be confined, monitored, and controlled. These images, when consumed by mass audiences, including teachers, create a reality about the spatial aspects of inner city schools, even if the images do not always reflect what takes place in such schools. The power of the media lies in its ability to teach in the absence of real experience.

In the absence of his experience in inner city schools, Earl explained that media images provided that window into a world that was not accessible to him:

Anita: Now looking back, what has been the main source of your knowledge about inner-city schools?

Earl: Media.

Anita: Okay, wanna expand on that?

Earl: Yeah, I’ll say media in terms of film and television, but I’ll also say media in terms of journalism, so newspapers, online and things like that, Toronto Star, which again that paper has a bias and an agenda and that informs the knowledge I have and my loyalty.

Vipond (2000) wrote that “much of what our media convey, especially but not only in English-speaking Canada, is not Canadian but American” (p. 1). With respect to pre-service teacher reliance on film and television media for “knowledge” about schools that serve low-income and minority students, Daniel (2010) explained that pre-service teachers in her study relied heavily on American film and television media for their conceptions of urban students. Researchers such as Picower (2009), Grant (2002), Hampton et al. (2008) and Trier (2005) each spoke to the role that media plays in the shaping of pre-service teacher attitudes toward inner city schooling.

Pre-service teacher reliance on an American media to inform how they make sense of inner city schooling in Canada must be analyzed critically. Critics have long charged films of representing racialized peoples in stereotypical and problematic ways (hooks, 1992). This is also true for how school films represent who inner city students and parents are. Kobayashi
and Peake (2000) wrote that visual media plays a role in how geographies are represented. Shabazz (2009a) explained that popular music, in the form of hip-hop and rap, has succeeded in creating a plethora of images about “the hood” or the inner city with respect to geography. The hood is constructed as a particular place in popular rap and hip-hop videos. These spaces are not only uniquely American, but are inhabited by impoverished African Americans and Latinos (Forman, 2002). For Shabazz (2009a) “the hood” is most and foremost constructed as a “dangerous space.” The success of the hip-hop and rap genre as a global music phenomenon means that young audiences are familiar with music videos portraying life in urban America (Kincheloe, 2004). Such videos are also instructive about who lives in the hood and about the spatial aspects of life there.

In returning to the carceral feel of American inner city schools, it is my assertion that the bodies of Black students are naturalized in this setting. I take this argument one step further to suggest that the bodies of Black male students often receive particular attention in such spaces. The use of carceral techniques in actual U.S. schools, followed by the representation of such techniques in popular film, means that violence is a natural function of the schooling experiences of inner city students. As prison-like, it becomes a male space where hegemonic forms of Black masculinity, through violence, must be policed and contained. This Black masculinity, as performance (Butler, 1990), constructs the Black male body as young, belonging to the urban jungle, and prone to violence. Connell (2001) defined hegemonic masculinity with respect to gender as, “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 38). This hegemonic masculinity is not the masculinity of
RuPaul, the drag queen, but a masculinity that conforms to an image of the Black male as a dangerous being in North American society.

Barrett (2001) wrote that hegemonic masculinity is based on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. It involves “the dynamic process by which groups create and sustain power, how ‘normal’ definitions and taken-for-granted expressions come to define situations” (p. 79). Hegemony involves the examination of processes that render some things as normal and ideal. Barrett (2001) wrote that hegemonic masculinity involves:

A particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current Western culture is a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational. (Barrett, 2001, p. 79)

Finally, as prison-like, the bodies of White students, in the carceral space of the school, are seen as “taking a wrong turn” or being out of place. At the same time, White bodies in such spaces can be deemed as impoverished bodies using what Holyfield et al. (2009) called the “poor White trash” ideology. The carceral depictions of inner city schools also plays a key role in preventing the most effective teachers from conceiving of themselves as belonging to this space.

Conclusion

Participants’ sense of surprise about the existence of poverty in Canada, in small Canadian towns, and among White students speaks to the need for TEPs to critically engage pre-service teachers in discussions about issues of social class; namely, the meaning of social class, what social class looks like in our everyday lives, and the different educational outcomes of students based on social class. Individual participants were very well versed in the fact that Canada is a multicultural nation; however, beyond this fact, Madison emerged as the one participant who had a clear understanding of social inequality. Participant narratives
also suggest that Canada’s identity as a multicultural nation may not include a reading of Canada as a multi-classed nation.

With respect to how participants understand the inner city school as a particular place in Canada, the meanings that each participant makes concerning inner city schooling must be positioned within a broader societal context. The discursive practices surrounding inner city schooling within the wider culture was evident in the views expressed by Earl, Bredz, and Tara. In an online search of the sociological literature and newspaper articles about such schools, few authors actually defined the term inner city. The inner city as a construct seems to require no definition. It has become “that which goes without saying.” What is both interesting and problematic about this notion of the inner city as being beyond definition is that it shuts down opportunities for dialogue. Common sense usage of the term implies that we already know who, what, and where the inner city is, even if the term is being used in different ways, at different times, and for different purposes. This is also true about its use to describe schools.

This goes-without-saying aspect of the inner city school reduces any desire to interrogate its meaning. It lulls one into believing that its definition should not be made problematic, despite the fact that in our Canadian context, nothing could be further from the truth. I return to the newspaper headline at the start of this chapter: “Reversing decline in our inner city schools.” The headline reveals a sense in which we know that inner city schools are ineffective, hence the headline’s abruptness and lack of background information. As known, the learning that takes place in inner city schools, the teachers who make this learning happen, and the students who are the focus of this learning, do not need to be explained. In chapter five, I discuss participant readings of inner city students. It is my
assertion that discursive constructions of inner city students help to create cultural myths surrounding notions of teaching, learning, and classroom management.
Chapter Five

“They are Out of Control”
The Making of the Inner City Student

Introduction

Inner-city kids show their inner strength; Charity CLICK aims to raise $50,000 to fund 24/7 programs for needy students. (Bermingham, *Vancouver Province*, May 2010)

Like inner city schools, inner city students have become mythologized in our cultural imagination. Inner city students, as featured in the headline above, are not like other students. They are “needy,” always wanting for something; be it breakfast programs, better homes, or better families. The deficit lens that is often used to see low-income and minority students within the wider culture (James-Wilson, 2007; Weiner, 1993) uses a narrative that suggests that such students are lacking in some way. The cultural myth surrounding inner city students is one that implies that, by virtue of their social class status or the communities in which they live, efforts must be made either to fix such students, or to assist them in escaping lives of despair. These narratives correspond to discursive practices that impact education reforms that are intended to support low income and minority students. However, the deficit framework that this culture beings with, is one that prevents inner city students from being viewed as, students. I ask who benefits from a discourse that is so steeped in dysfunction that we are discouraged from asking unsettling questions about why inner city students are often constructed in the manner in which they are. How is it that such constructions came to be, and what are the responsibilities of educators with respect to
rewriting this discourse such that it more accurately describes the lives and education needs of low-income and minority students.

Daniel (2010) argued that the imagery most often built around urban schooling is one that constructs inner city schooling in pathologizing ways:

The imagery that is attached to urban schools (i.e., schools located within the areas marked as the inner city rings) continues to be mired in deficit constructs and the pathologizing of students, parents, and communities. The very nature of the physical structures in urban settings and schools are designed in ways that serve to create and replicate this experience of deficit. (Daniel, 2010, p. 824)

Haberman (2003) explained that in the U.S., where inner city school districts are integrally intertwined with big business, there are many beneficiaries of failing urban schools, including:

(a) school board employees hired to run urban school districts,

(b) students outside urban districts competing for college entrance whose low performance on standardized tests, when compared to those of students from urban schools, are seen as having greater ability; these students are also more competitive with respect to future employment prospects compared with minority and low-income students,

(c) parents, who are able to exercise choice for their children in smaller suburban school boards,

(d) lawyers suing urban districts,

(e) vendors of supplies and equipment, food service vendors, transportation vendors and employees

(f) contractors and builders,

(g) education consultants, higher education institutions, and a list of other beneficiaries with a total of 22 vested interest groups.
I raise this point to suggest that the discourse of failing inner city schools is not an innocent discourse. Such a discourse must be sustained because various institutions depend on the failure of inner city schools and students. Many individuals benefit from any failure that is experienced by inner city schools. A process of displacement (Delaney, 2002; McKittrick, 2006) is also at work when the inner city students and inner city schools are established as sites of dysfunction. In reality, this dysfunction actually benefits individuals who are not of the inner city.

In this chapter, I present data on participant conceptions of inner city students as observed through their field placements. The data revealed that participants who approached inner city schooling using a critical conceptual framework that questioned common sense understandings of inner city schools often applied this same critique to their analysis of low-income and minority students. The opposite is also true; participants who were invested in hegemonic ideologies of inner city schooling tended to apply a similar lens to how they understood inner city students. Some participant narratives revealed a complex interweaving (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994) of discourses whereby constructions of inner city students were often entangled with issues surrounding student behaviour, the ability of teachers to teach in light of this behaviour, and the need for teachers to exercise control in the classroom (Britzman, 1991). I rely on Britzman’s (1991) analysis of this notion of control with respect to teaching.

In the absence of first-hand experience with inner city communities, Earl, Bredz, and Tara often relied on their “observations” of inner city students on their field placements to formulate their opinions. I encase the term observation is quotation marks because I argue that this seeing is partial due to a lack of theory provided by the TEP (Britzman, 1991) that would have helped to situate inner city students within a broader discussion about social
class and social inequality. Currently, a debate exists in the research literature concerning the role of field placements in pre-service teacher conceptions of low-income and minority students (Hampton et al., 2008). One the one hand, studies indicated that the inner city field placements often provide realistic inner city field experiences to pre-service teachers. Research by Mason (1997) found that “exposure to urban classrooms did not appear to negatively impact prospective teachers’ perceptions” (p. 34). He wrote further that exposure to inner city students in classroom settings improved pre-service teacher perceptions about student motivation, discipline, language proficiency, and parental support (p. 34). However, the results of Mason’s study indicated that, for a small percentage of pre-service teachers, the experience diminished their desire to teach in an inner city setting. Participants indicated that they were “overwhelmed by the poor material conditions they encountered in schools” (p. 39). Mason (1997) cited research by Haberman and Post who reported that participant perceptions of low-income and minority students were maintained despite having positive or negative field placement experiences. Haberman and Post explained that “people see what they believe” (Haberman & Post in Masson, 1997, p. 30). They suggested that pre-service teacher beliefs about low-income and minority students were “deeply enculturated and highly resistant to change” (p. 30).

At times, I asked participants direct questions concerning their conceptions of inner city students. One such question was, “Now that you are a teacher, how would you describe inner city students, what might inner city students look like, how might inner city students behave, how might they be dressed?” I modelled these questions after questions posed by Paul (2001). The questions served to determine whether participants held essentialist views about inner city students or whether they might challenge any attempt on my part to essentialize low-income and minority students in any way.
Myth One: Inner City Students are Diverse

Results of the study revealed that inner city students were largely constructed as “diverse.” Earl revealed that inner city students were ethnically diverse but this diversity depended on the school itself. I encase the term “diversity” in quotes for the ways in which it has become a catch-all phrase for difference. The term diversity also functions as a coded term for race. Earl discussed the diversity of Toronto area schools that he observed during this field placement. The sense that inner city students are ethnically diverse or racialized, also appeared in Tristan’s narrative.

Anita: Now that you are a teacher, how do you think you would describe inner-city students? What do they look like? And how would they dress? Just give me anything that comes to mind in terms of physical attributes.

Earl: Inner-city students would have a lot of energy…but physical attributes, is like what I was saying before, in terms of ethnic diversity of the school and student population. Part of that too is that your students are bringing lots of different things with them to school in terms of psychologically. And because it’s a more diverse population, in so many senses, you’re going to have, yes, you’re going to have students who are late everyday cause they’re taking three buses to get here.

In Earl’s narrative, the inner city student is linked to difference. His narrative further reveals a sense in which the students do not live in walking distance to the school, but must travel some distance to arrive there, hence their late arrival to school. This lateness also signals a disruption to classes that have already begun. In addition, while in other parts of his narrative Earl indicates that the definition of inner city schools means that such schools can be located anywhere, his words suggest that the inner city school is situated in an urban area. Later in the interview, he explained that inner city schools might also be attended by a high numbers of refugee students:

Earl: You tend to get a lot of refugee students. And so, as a teacher that’s something you have to deal with…Someone may be showing up in your classroom tomorrow and it’s May and they’re just coming from wherever, and you just have to deal with that as well.
The high number of immigrants to provinces like Ontario means that, for some teachers, new student admission to classroom can occur at various times throughout the year. However, Earl explained that students who are both diverse and impoverished pose additional challenges for a teacher:

Earl: So, I think there’s more, I don’t want to say, they are more challenging in terms of it’s not just, “Johnny didn’t do his homework last night.” So there’s different sorts of challenges you have to face when you have students coming from that impoverished background and from a more diverse, or [are] not the students] what the societal standard or perception would be.

Although Earl does not specifically state that this perceived challenge is due to his own inexperience with such difference; it is clear that he sees the intersections of race and social class in the student population as a negative aspect with which teachers must deal.

**The surprise of White inner city students.**

Several participants discussed their surprise that White students, as opposed to diverse ones, attend inner city schools. Bredz described her surprise by the level of poverty that she witnessed and emphasized that her cognitive dissonance had to do with the students’ Whiteness. I ask Bredz about her field placement when she shared her sense of surprise with respect to White students:

Anita: What grade were you teaching there?

Bredz: I was in a grade one. I was in a grade six classroom for four weeks.

Anita: All right.

Bredz: And I was in a grade one classroom for four weeks at the same school.

Anita: Okay. What was that like?

Bredz: Wow. You said inner city (sarcastically)

Anita: Yes, yes, absolutely
Bredz: Coming from the Caribbean, it was the first time....and I am not racist in any sense of the word. But the first time I had seen White people behave the way that they did, in the sense that...I don’t know. The background [social class] that I....my heart went out to these children. They came from a different home than I did... it was my first time in a school where I was surrounded by children that spoke up, not even having food in their fridge or their cupboard, you know.

Bredz’ narrative reveals an ideology of White social class privilege that was challenged during her field experience. While Bredz did not speak about the material meaning of Whiteness on the island where she is from, her surprise indicates that for her, White poverty is surprising. Her surprise suggests that seeing White impoverished students ran counter to her constructions of Whiteness. These constructions were challenged when she witnessed the heterogeneity of Whiteness instead of common sense understandings of “Whiteness as a structural-cultural location incurring a particular position of power in social relations” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 273).

What is most telling about Bredz’ surprise of White poverty is what this reveals about the mapping of poverty onto racialized bodies. Like Tara’s surprise of White poverty in inner city schools, Bredz’ surprise signals the extent to which poverty becomes a function of racialized bodies, as opposed to White ones. I cite McKittrick (2006), writing of Black female geographies and land ownership, when she argued that although the Black body does not always translate into poverty, Blackness and dispossession are often linked. A disposessed Blackness is linked to such things as joblessness, criminality, and incarceration. McKittrick (2006) explained that “dispossession is an important racial narrative, which socially and economically rates...human/life value” (p. 5). She emphasized that often, the “only recognized geographic relevancy permitted to Black subjects in the diaspora is that of dispossession” (p. 4). In this sense, White dispossession is rendered senseless. Black bodies that are disposessed, she emphasized, become “bodies that are naturally in place” (p. 4).
Bredz’ narrative forces me to question the effect that this mapping has for White students with respect to race. Specifically, (a) what does it mean for White bodies that are imaged to be middle-class to appear as impoverished, (b) what might a juxtaposition between an ideology of White racial privilege and the reality of White poverty mean for how such students and their families are read in schools, and (c) in what ways might our culture work to punish Whiteness when it is not located in bodies that are marked by privilege?

Myth Two: Inner City Students are “Out of Control”

Individual participants often constructed low-income and minority students in relation to behaviour and classroom management issues, as found in research by Groulx (2001), Hampton et al. (2008), and research in Canada by McCready and Soloway (2010). In this section, I outline how participants conceptualized inner city students in relation to their roles as teachers. For some participants, classroom management issues were often cited as reasons why they were reluctant to teach in schools that serve low-income and minority students. In many ways, the inner city student in this context functioned as a metaphor for a teacher’s ability to exercise control in classroom spaces (Britzman, 1991). In this way, the inner city classroom can be understood as a particular geographical space where relations of power and discipline play out.

According to Earl, inner city students at both the elementary and high school levels have difficulty settling down. This was his response when I asked him how inner students behave:

Anita: Yes of course. So, how do they behave? Cause you talk about energy…

Earl: Yeah, I think in terms of, it can be harder to get them to settle down and I think, it’s so weird cause it’s, because I think even in a senior class you’ll have more trouble getting the students to sort of settle.
Earl explained that he relied on field placement observations that he and one of his Host Teachers made while visiting an inner city classroom in another small, Ontario city. Earl suggested that even high school students would have difficulty settling down to suggest that behaviour issues are not restricted to elementary inner city students.

Andy offered a counter narrative when he suggested that student behaviour must be understood in terms of other issues that students may be facing in their lives:

Anita: So if you were to describe the students at an inner-city school in terms of what they look like, how they’re dressed, what would they look like, or what would that be?

Andy: So you may see a student sleeping in class, but it’s not because they’re not interested; it’s because they’re exhausted. And um, something else might be… students might not be able to…or they can’t have breakfast because their parents don’t have enough money to feed them, so that would definitely be something else that would be common, yeah.

It is clear that although Andy understands that inner city student behaviour must be understood in relation to broader issues that students may be facing, his narrative relies on a deficit framework involving students coming from homes where parents do not have “enough money to feed them” for relevancy. Andy explained further that the behaviour of inner city student must be conceived in relation to teachers:

Anita: All right, um, now you talked about behaviours a little bit in terms of high school students’ fatigue or working, any other types of behaviours that you might notice?

Andy: Well, I mean, that definitely all depends on…I really feel that the teacher makes a huge difference in that behaviour, just how motivating, understanding, and captivating they can be. I feel that it’s definitely the teacher that can make a difference in that sense. Um, and so, thinking about it, seeing how even, let’s say, the teacher can be understanding of the situation the students are in and pushing them harder would definitely be something that can be important.

Again, Andy’s experiences as an inner city student provide the lens through which he conceptualizes inner city student behaviour, instead of using essentialist explanations. For
Andy, the teacher sets a tone in the classroom and any reading of student behaviour must be understood through an examination of teacher attitudes.

Unlike Andy who read student behaviour from the perspective of teachers, Tara expressed surprise that inner city students might exhibit “attitude” or resistance in classrooms. I asked her to share how inner city students might behave in classrooms and she relayed that inner city students showed attitude even at a very young age:

Anita: All right, so how might inner city students behave? (laughs)
Tara: I guess, so like, at X school, it’s, for me, I’m, like, it’s… (laughs). Um, there was, well, there’s still a lot of talking back.
Anita: Oh, yeah, uh huh
Tara: Um..
Anita: So all right, tell me what that is? So talking back, give me an idea of what that is?
Tara: I guess so like, at X school. It’s, for me, I’m like, it’s… um, there was, well, there’s still a lot of talking back, swearing at the teacher or something. Things like that that, or, swear… yeah, or like, that attitude which I was, like, “You’re 8 years old. I cannot believe that you have the attitude, like, I’m not doing that.” Like, “I’m not doing my work.” And I’m, like, “You’re eight.” like, you should not…like, what’s happened in your life that now there’s that, like…like, “No, I’m not doing it.” And, granted, I have no other experience with it. I don’t know…you know…but it’s just, that also really surprises me. That that’s, that that happens. Because I didn’t think that… I don’t know, the really young kids…I’m surprised that they have those attitudes. So there’s that… a lot.

For Tara, the students themselves are the sources of difficulty in an inner city classroom.

Nowhere in her narrative does she consider that, perhaps, the students may be resistant to the teacher for reasons relating to curriculum, the culture of the classroom, and the culture of school. Tara sees this “talking back” as defiance and such defiance is read as being unacceptable in schools where the teacher’s authority and control are not to be questioned (Britzman, 1991).
hooks (1989) explained that, while growing up in the southern U.S., talking back meant to speak as an equal to a person in a position of authority (p. 5). Tara’s narrative reveals that the student resistance to a teacher’s authority is deemed deviant. When Tara says, “what’s happened in your life that now there’s that, like, like, ‘No, I’m not doing it’,” she fails to acknowledge that she is evaluating the students using a particular lens that casts their resistance as threatening. This deviance is held against a backdrop of student compliance that is constructed as normal.

Britzman (1991) wrote that pre-service teachers are familiar with the idea that a teacher’s role is that of “social controller” (p. 48). She theorized that pre-service teachers come to know what teachers are expected to do in classrooms. Pre-service teachers are also familiar with the consequences of teachers who are unable to exercise control over their students. When the classroom is read as space, it becomes an isolated place where teachers must often work alone (Apple, 1988; Britzman, 1991), because of prevailing cultural myths about who teachers are. These myths cast teachers are being self-made, experts, and the arbiter of all knowledge.

Using the cultural myth of “everything depends on the teacher,” Britzman (1991) wrote that “unless the teacher establishes control there will be no learning” since a lack of such control means that students will control the teacher (p. 223). In this myth, learning equals control. A lack of control means that no learning can take place. Britzman (1991) asserted that schools have built-in mechanisms that ensure that a teacher focuses on her/his ability to be in control of their classrooms. Additionally, outside aid in controlling the class is perceived as a sign of professional incompetency. She explained that “teachers tend to judge themselves, and others tend to judge them, on the basis of their success with this individual struggle” (p. 223).
Seeking assistance with classroom management issues places a teacher’s reputation at risk. Britzman (1991) theorized that the isolation of the classroom places pressure on teachers to equate student learning with teacher control.

**Myth Three: Inner City Students Must “Survive” their Environment**

Tristan explained that inner city students behave like a cross section of any group in society, as he attempted to avoid essentializing them. However, he related that inner city student behaviour must be understood in “relation to what they have to do to survive in their environment.” The inner city itself as a particular place, he shared, might bring about some social, cultural, and economic issues for inner city students. Tristan recognized that there are structural forces at play in the lives of inner city students:

Anita: All right and how might they behave?

Tristan: Well I think I would suspect they’d behave like a cross section of anyone.

Anita: Aha, aha

Tristan: You know with relation in to what they have to do to survive in their environment.

Anita: Yes

Tristan: So do I expect them to… if they are an inner city, in a large city maybe, they have more of a mentality of how they protect themselves on the street.

Anita: ahum, ahum

Tristan: Right, but all those cultural identity things and that’s how gangs start and they aren’t all bad, because gangs recruit the same way the military or police organization; [it's about] belong to something that is bigger than you. Have rank status [the students] and understand how to develop, be respected by the people in the group and all these other things. So, it’s not necessarily bad, it’s just a natural occurrence.
This idea of survival in the inner city is a common narrative of Hollywood films, such as *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007), where students are cast as having to fight to survive. This is similar to the narrative about inner city students living in an urban jungle (Daniel, 2010). Tristan’s narrative reveals further that inner city students will want to protect themselves against a “natural” threat that exists “on the street.” Later he shares that gangs begin when individuals feel a need to belong to an entity that is larger than they are. He links the gang, as an organization, to institutions such as the military or the police, organizations that rely on hegemonic masculinity for their legitimacy with respect to power. Tristan’s narrative reveals that notions of respect and hierarchy that are built into the structure of the gang are attractive to inner city students because of their need to belong.

Tristan associates inner city students with what he perceives to be understandable reasons why they, needing protection from the streets, would naturally gravitate toward the structure of a gang. This association is important because Tristan begins his narrative by suggesting that inner city students are like all students. However, his association of inner city students and gang culture is based on an underlying assumption that the inner city student’s life is not only lacking, but is constantly exposed to danger. This danger places them in a position where they need protection. By its very definition, a gang conjures up images of criminal activity. It is called a gang as opposed to a club or an organization because the term indicates that this gathering of men and/or women is for the sole purpose of criminal behaviour.

Tristan explains that inner city students need to belong to an organization that is bigger than they are indicating, in many respects, that inner city students do not already belong to anything. Yet, they belong to families, churches, schools, and a host of other organizations, as do all students. Tristan constructs inner city students as having no
alternative but to seek solace in gangs; hence, his use of the term “natural.” This reading creates a sense that, by living in a large city, it becomes natural for inner city students to get caught up in gang activity.

Unlike Earl who admitted that much of his perceptions of inner city and urban students were informed by media, Tristan does not reveal the source of his perceptions, except in a portion of the interview when he shared that he was exposed to inner city students who were drug addicts while on his field placement. I read Tristan’s narrative of inner city students and gang culture as one that was informed by film because he did not share with me that the inner city students of his field placement belonged to gangs. His narrative corroborates findings in Hampton et al. (2008), who stated that pre-service teachers in their study often associated poor urban students with gang activity.

With respect to research, Daniel (2010) argued that pre-service teachers enter the classrooms armed with years of media portrayals of urban students and expect to see these behaviours replicated in their practicum placements:

Canadian teachers’ images of urban schools primarily emerge from the media, most specifically the films that portray urban students as violent, racialized bodies who are underfunctioning in harsh environments. Further to this, the protagonist is usually a White teacher who braves the urban jungle to “civilize the barbarians.”… The modes of survival, patterns of communication, and the behaviors of students are demonized and the only seeming route to humanity is to ensure that the “savages” are taught to mimic the colonizer. These teacher candidates enter the classrooms armed with years of media portrayals of urban students and expect to see these behaviors replicated in their practicum placements. (Daniel, 2010, p. 832)

Tristan’s narrative, when read as racial text, associates inner city students with a criminality that is rationalized because of their supposed need to belong. This need to belong only makes sense when the home lives of inner city students and schools themselves are read as spaces where inner city students do not find acceptance. This deficit reading of inner city
students functions to naturalize any involvement that low income and minority students
might have in actual gang activity as normal and reasonable, given their search for belonging.

**Myth Four: Inner City Students are Challenging**

I asked each participant to discuss the role that her/his own racial identity played in
their willingness to teach at an inner city school. Earl spoke of the intense worry that he had
relating to issues of race. He discussed antiracist initiatives that were being developed on his
university campus and shared that through these initiatives, he was often made to feel
ashamed of being White. He confided that the approach used by racialized students when
implementing such initiatives made him doubtful that he could be an effective educator in
inner city schools:

Anita: Now you had mentioned it being a challenge and a barrier but you said
because you’re White and you’re male and you’re Canadian.

Earl: Well, not the fact that I’m Canadian, but just the fact… that’s the way I identify
myself on a survey or something like that. I identify myself as Canadian and if that
wasn’t an option I write it in cause that’s my cultural identity. My ethnic identity is
Caucasian so I see the fact that I’m Caucasian going into an inner-city school, in
terms of…with a racially diverse student body as a barrier because I would…because
my own perception, and this is my, probably ignorant perception, because I see
myself as being…I represent what…I represent that cultural idea that a certain…
talking about… sort of… am I still… I’d be concerned with gaining respect because,
how do I gain respect if I am viewed…and as I have been informed that I am
viewed, based on things that I’ve heard at the university and things like that…It’s
awful because there’s all this anti-oppression and sensitivity training and like, I should
be walking around with a paper bag over my head, because sometimes I feel
like…and I wonder if that’s true because the way some people have made it sound,
like, by looking at someone, am I oppressing them and reminding them that they are
different? That’s honestly what I feel…that’s what I worry about and that’s an
intense worry… So for me to go into…and that’s something that…and the only time
I’ve had a very diverse class is when I was teaching grade two. And at that point I feel
like it’s not as much of an issue because those students don’t have as much baggage,
because its grade two. We’re excited, and we’re learning about this and we’re reading
this story and playing. It’s very…race doesn’t come into that, but if I’m teaching
anything, like grade seven through grade 12 or something, like that, they have all
these media biases and images with them. They have whatever baggage and things
they’ve heard from their family and peer groups and I’m worried about offending someone.

Earl begins the narrative by stating that “it’s awful” that the anti-oppression initiatives make him feel like wearing a bag over his head. Here, he sees these initiatives as victimizing White males instead of seeking understanding about the conditions that create the need for what he refers to as “sensitivity and anti-oppression training” on his campus. He wonders whether to look at a racialized person as a White male is to oppress them. This question suggests to me that he locates oppression in individual acts of racism (McIntyre, 1997) without a conceptual framework that sees oppression as systemic on the one hand and interlocking on the other.

The research literature on pre-service teacher resistance to antiracist education (Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996, 2003) speaks to the charge of reverse discrimination in university courses that ask pre-service teachers to critically reflect upon their own Whiteness, privilege, and issues of social inequality.

Earl also mentions that younger students might not be a problem with respect to his teaching; however, older students, from grades seven through twelve, might pose a challenge. Older students are able to articulate a racial critique of schools, education, and the role of teachers within it. Although Earl does not mention the word “fear,” his narrative suggests that he is afraid. Earl rationalizes that the media images consumed by inner city students, coupled with information provided to them by their family members about issues of race, would create a hostile situation for him as a White male.

Earl fails to articulate that he might be able to learn how to be an effective educator in schools that serve low-income and minority students. He locates his racial identity and the racial identity of inner city students as the sole reasons why he might be ineffective as an educator in this context. His racial identity and the fact that he might offend racialized students are the reasons he provides for his intense worry.
While I am pleased about Earl’s honest disclosure, I cite research by Picower (2009) who found that pre-service teacher reluctance to teach inner city contexts was informed by issues of race. Participants often used justifications, such as an inability to be effective teachers, as reasons why they could not teach in such settings:

Many of the participants stated that they found it difficult to relate to people, particularly students, who were different and who faced struggles different from their own. They made this assertion to justify why they thought they would be “ineffective” teaching urban students and why they should “not take jobs in urban schools.” In so doing, they released the need to consider that perhaps their aforementioned intense fear of students of color and urban communities might be the real reason that they did not want to take a position in such a school. (Picower, 2009, p. 208)

Earl’s fear can also be read from a spatial perspective and a geography of fear (Mitchell, 2000) perspective where he must come to term with teaching the racialized Other in a manner that renders his Whiteness no longer invisible. Mitchell (2000) cited hooks when he wrote:

“Most White people do not have to ‘see’ Black people (constantly appearing on billboards, television, movies, magazines etc.) and they do not need to ever be on guard, and can even imagine that they are also invisible to Blacks…” They can live so, that is, until some event erupts into their consciousness. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 257)

The event that erupts into Earl’s consciousness is the thought of his teaching low-income and minority students in a schooling space where his Whiteness is something that he must come to terms with.

The questions posed to Earl about his teaching at schools that serve low-income and minority students means that for the first time, he must think through what it means to encounter students who may call his Whiteness into question. The possibility of such questioning means that Earl might have to ask himself questions about his own social location that he may not be prepared to grapple with. Until Earl gives considerable thought to his teaching at a school with students whom he fears might challenge him, his Whiteness
is something that he can afford to *not* think about. In the words of Dyer (1997) and McIntosh (1988), Earl’s White privilege prevents him from seeing that privilege for what it is.

Earl’s body language was one that suggested that he was trying to be honest with himself about whether his teaching in an inner city context was something that he could visualize. The tone of his narrative is not one of confidence, but one that casts his teaching at an inner city school as a problem from the start. As teacher educators and researchers, our role is to critically locate and analyze the meanings behind pre-service teacher fear of inner city students in order to make connections between what they are able to articulate and what they might never say.

**Perceived Lack of Expectations for Inner City Student Achievement**

Bredz explained that inner city students require love and support. Her narration uses a deficit model of the home lives of inner city students, with respect to their achievement. Bredz explained that based on her observations at her field placement, inner city students need love and support because this was lacking in both the school and the home.

Anita: Now that you are a teacher, how would you describe the inner city students? What do they look like? How are they dressed?

Bredz: Children that need a lot of love and support, and need something to look forward to every day, that gets them out of their house and stimulates them to learn… and know that regardless of what’s happening at home, this is life…um, you can deal with it no matter what.

Later in our discussion, after relating some of my experiences as a teacher with inner city students, Bredz discussed a sense in which she felt that inner city students were not pushed in schools and that teachers did not seem to have high expectations for their academic achievement:
Bredz: Some of the children, like in any classroom, had a lot of potential, and needed to be pushed in a lot more ways than they were. And not only pushed, but supported, right. And encouraged and nurtured. Towards higher levels.

Anita: Yes. Do you feel that they weren’t pushed by the entire admin or by the teacher or was it the environment? Was it at home?

Bredz: I think it had to with everything. It was from the home that they were raised in it. And in classroom, the other peers that they were in class with. Where I saw some children were not... I was there for four weeks. It was enough to kind of read between the lines. We children [inaudible] things, you know, you could do so much more. But because of where you are [the students] and it’s...you know. You’re kind of giving a little half-assed, kind of, and you’re getting by. And that’s fine and that’s acceptable. Really and truly, I think you can do so much more [inaudible] so much more. And I think that that is such an important thing for a teacher to direct children. To develop their weaknesses and push their strengths, right. Which is something that they [the students] lacked support in, generally.

In Bredz’ narrative, teachers had few expectations for student achievement, which Bredz identifies as relating to where the students live. She explains her perception that students were not pushed to their academic potential. I asked her where she felt this lack of expectation came from. In hindsight, I should not have provided her with the examples that I had, since she went on to repeat them. However, her observation that the students were putting in an effort that was “half-assed” is telling because it confirms what critics have long charged concerning efforts made toward low-income and minority students in schools.

Canadian education critics (Dei & James, 2002; Dei et al., 1997; Henry et al., 1995) have argued that some Canadian teachers have low expectations of racialized and marginalized students, leading to their eventual disengagement from school. Henry et al. 1995) wrote that teacher expectations of students are linked to their pedagogical approach to students in the classroom. A teacher who holds stereotypical opinions about a particular racial group is likely to translate these biases into differential teaching techniques and classroom treatment (p. 180).
Moreover, while teacher beliefs alone do not account for the eventual failure of students in schools, problematic beliefs are often tied to pedagogical practices that have real outcomes in the lives of already marginalized students.

Dei et al. (1997) provided research that indicates that Black students in Ontario who prematurely drop out describe low teacher expectations as one of the factors in their alienation from classrooms. These expectations were often conveyed through the hidden curriculum. Student narratives cited discouragement by guidance counsellors about their academic potential:

Drop-outs tended, more than students to see the ways in which subtle messages from guidance counsellors and teachers had real consequences in their lives. Many drop-outs discussed instances when counsellors told them to move into lower streams, take fewer challenging classes, or drop out of classes they were finding difficult. (Dei et al., 1997, p. 132)

In the case of Bredz’ field placement, both the students and teachers were White, suggesting instead that expectations relating to social class and student achievement were operating in this context.

Anyon (2008) wrote that the hidden curriculum, where students are streamed into lower educational tracts, might actually operate in entire schools and not simply with particular students or in particular courses. Results of her research suggest that some schools might prepare all students for a life of work instead of higher education. Bredz’ observation that inner city students need to be loved may sound patronizing; however, I argue that her words might reflect a desire on her part for teachers to approach inner city students in the same manner in which they might approach suburban students or their own children. Her narrative reveals a strong sense in which the students on her field placement needed teachers who expected them to achieve, despite their social class standing.
The Impact of the Field Placement on Conceptions of Inner City Students

Participant narratives about low-income and minority students were primarily informed by their field placements. In the absence of critical knowledge about social inequality and the ways in which the poor are blamed for their stations in life (McLaren, 2003), the participants used the field placement as a teaching tool about inner city schooling. In many ways, what individual participants saw on their field placement was taken as a given, since this witnessing was not deconstructed or contextualized in any way that enabled the participants to make meaning out of their observations. For Tara, who self identified as coming from a middle-to upper-class background, being placed at an inner school only worked to reinforce the normalcy that she had assigned to suburban schools. I argue that the act of placing a pre-service teacher at an inner city context, without also providing the theoretical underpinnings necessary to enable the student to critically analyze what is unfolding within that educational space, increases the likelihood that hegemonic understandings of inner city schools will be reinforced.

Tara, Bredz, Earl and Tristan all shared that the field placement was their first exposure to low income students, and in the case of Earl, to racialized students. Yet, after their field placement assignments ended, participants shared that they were not provided with the theoretical space to make sense of what they had experienced. Neither were they provided with opportunities to relate these micro level experiences to larger structural or systemic issues on a social, political, and economic level. Critical discussion about issues of unemployment, the myth of meritocracy, the experiences of immigrant families, and the workings of power and privilege in schools may have provided participants with a theoretical lens with which they could begin to ask meaningful questions about why students behaved the way they did.
Research by Daniel (2010) indicated that Canadian pre-service teachers were more positive about teaching in inner city contexts once they had witnessed first-hand that Canadian inner city schools differed greatly from their perceptions of American inner city schools. Further, research by Murrell (2000) on the role of community teachers in the preparation of teachers for work in urban schools, emphasized that providing pre-service teachers with mere knowledge about minority and impoverished inner city communities, without a practice component, is insufficient. The participants who participated in this research were placed in inner city schooling contexts with the assumption that these placements did not need to be accompanied by a theoretical component as part of their teacher education.

Murrell (2000) suggested that knowledge, coupled with experience, provides the greatest opportunities for pre-service teachers to think through the meaning of teaching in schools that serve low income and minority students. This type of knowledge cannot be prescriptive. It cannot be presented to pre-service teachers using a using a “toolkit” model with instructions for how pre-service teachers must respond to one or two instances of marginalization. Such knowledge must equip teachers with concepts they can apply to different circumstances. Ultimately, the pre-service teacher should be able to adapt this conceptual learning to different education contexts where difference is involved (Lewis, in conversation).

I raise this point to suggest that in the absence of opportunities for pre-service teachers to critically unpack observations of inner city students on field placements, new teachers run the risk of walking way from such field placements with problematic views that may never be challenged before they enter classrooms as teachers. It is the responsibility of TEPs placing pre-service teachers in inner city schools as part of their teacher education to
assist them in developing a conceptual framework that will enable them to ask critical questions about schools instead of accepting what they see as a given. This needs to happen before, during, and after the field placement. Teacher education programs must provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to unpack their conceptual baggage about inner city communities. Future teachers must be challenged with critical questions about what this unpacking means for their teaching. It might mean having to discuss the role that their own social class background might play in their approach to inner city families. It might also mean providing the space, both physically and conceptually, to repack new meanings and to rethink concepts that they may have take for granted in the past.

**Conclusion**

Using the findings presented in this chapter, the inner city student as diverse and the surprise of the White inner city student have meaning for how individual teachers in this study conceive of who inner city students are. The surprise of low-income students in small, predominantly White cities has meaning for where inner city students are expected to live. The construction of the inner city student as out of control and the conceptions that they must survive their environment have implications for how inner city students become mythologized within this culture. The fact that low-income students were imagined to be racialized students ignores the fact that not all low-income students are racialized at all. In fact, racialized students in Canada attend middle-class, suburban, private, and charter schools. Secondly, based on the findings of this study alone, White impoverished students emerge as occupying a surprising social class location because White poverty is unexpected. Thirdly, predominantly White cities emerge as unexpected spaces for the location of inner city schools. This makes the appearance of low-income students and families in such spaces
unexpected and out of place. Using this logic, if racialized students are expected to exist in a school located in a large metropolitan city, the placement of such students in any other space automatically renders them, misplaced. This includes the White, low-income student body in a school that serves low-income and minority students and the middle-class or wealthy racialized student body in small and predominantly White cities.

If there is fear surrounding the inner city student and if the inner city student is seen as a behaviour problem, these portraits impact the schooling spaces where inner city schools are imagined to be. When students are feared, teachers, who are heavily invested in an ideology of control of students, are placed in a position to choose schools where they will not be afraid of students. In such schools, their expected roles as social controllers remain intact and they can succeed at doing that they are expected to do, establish order.

Further if low-income and minority students are read as naturally gravitating towards gangs in order that they must survive the dangers of the street, these constructions further inform the rendering of the inner school as a dangerous space. The inner city school becomes a place no longer giving priority to effective pedagogy, teaching, and learning. The school becomes a place of surveillance and discipline with the understanding that those who will not follow the rules will be punished (Foucault, 1995). This notion of the inner city school as what I call a kinder-prison has tremendous policy implications since a preoccupation with discipline and surveillance requires the recruitment of a particular type of teacher. Instead of a focus on excellence in teaching, the focus is shifted to managing student behaviour. Britzman (1991) spoke to the ways in which TEPs, with their focus on experience at the expense of theory, privilege teaching practice instead of teacher knowledge. Teacher education programs, she wrote, often relegate theory to a secondary position. Emphasis is
placed on the teacher’s mastery of subject matter and the teacher’s ability to engage students in classroom learning that will ensure their success.

These discursive practices have implications for the recruitment of teachers who actually wish to teach, as opposed to manage, students. Those teachers who wish to work with students with the expressed purpose of watching them grow academically might be discouraged from working in a setting where they are being asked to establish control above all other tasks. Problematic constructions of low-income and minority students can also be viewed using a gendered lens. Female teachers may not wish to place themselves in situations that are rendered dangerous or combative. This could be one reason why the most effective teachers graduating from pre-service TEPs might have difficulty conceiving themselves teaching inner city students. A teaching position that privileges classroom management above student learning might be unappealing to teachers who wish to focus on their mastery of teaching for the benefit of students.

Participant narratives about inner city students do not occur in a vacuum. They correspond to the discourse that circulates about inner city students and inner city schools within the wider culture (Trier, 2005). The inner city student narrative is not new, but has been nuanced to fit our time and place. As a case in point, I conducted an anecdotal review of national Canadian newspaper articles for stories about Canadian inner city schools and students using the Proquest search engine. I list here two additional headlines that featured stories using the term inner city in the title. The underlying story of each headline is one that casts inner city schools and children as deficit or lacking in some way:

Principal praises Oilers’ efforts; Players’ visits boost spirits of troubled teens at Inner City High School. (Cardillo, *Edmonton Journal*, October 2010)

and,
Students see their stories told; Program hopes to boost the 3 Rs with lessons tailored to daily realities of inner-city children. (Brown, *Toronto Star*, July 2009)

The troubled teens of the first headline could describe teenagers at any school; however, the troubled teens of an inner city school are deviant. The headline feeds into a common sense narrative of the inner city student as problematic. The second headline speaks to the “daily realities” faced by inner city students. I rarely see the term applied to suburban students because in this context, the “daily realities” functions as a coded term (Li, 2005) for economic or social hardship. I include these excerpts to demonstrate the ways in which the discursive practices surrounding inner city schooling via print, television, and film media, deeply impact what is known about inner city schools and the students that they serve.

Chapter seven explores participant conceptions of inner city parents and their experiences with schools.
Chapter Six

Conceptions of Inner City Parents

Introduction

Research from the TDSB’s “Model Schools” (2010) initiative reports that in some identified schools, a large percentage of low-income and minority parents are new immigrants to Canada. In many respects then, immigrant parents approach schools with memories of schooling from different places around the world. Because inner city schools are characterized by students living in poverty, immigrant parents at such schools must also negotiate settlement into a new country and culture, demands of employment, and the education needs of their children. I asked each participant to share their conceptions of inner city parents and their interactions with schools. Tristan described inner city parents as the “salt of the earth,” the core element of society,” and “light hearted, working folks”:

Anita: So, what comes to mind when I say the term inner city parents?

Tristan: Well I think, I think it’s again, a cross section of people who really care about their kids and really care about school. And some that did not have a positive school success or positive school experience. And I think all those things factor in…’cause if I was working three jobs and working eighteen hours a day, no matter how much I love my kids, my patience with the school that didn’t support them, especially if I didn’t have a positive view, would probably be limited.

Tristan shared that if inner city parents had negative experiences with schools, they might “transpose that on whoever is there now” with respect to teachers, as well as on their children’s experiences with schools. He explained that if he put himself in the shoes of parents, he might be “a little bit more… a little bit more terse and a little bit less accepting of the fallibilities of the school system.” In his narrative, he discusses the fact that low-income
and minority parents might not be patient with “the school that didn’t support them.” This is an interesting comment for Tristan to make because his narrative reveals a sense in which the lack of support of inner city students is commonplace. Tristan is suggesting here that inner city parents might have little patience with schools because of their own negative experiences with schooling, which is compounded by other pressures that they might be grappling with in their lives. Although he describes low-income and minority parents as “light hearted,” his narrative contradicts this claim.

There were numerous points in my interview with Tristan where I felt that his responses were rehearsed. It seemed as though he was stating what he felt were the right answers as opposed to his genuine feelings. The fact that Tristan was interviewed twice may have contributed to the rehearsed feel of his responses. However, I often wondered if he truly believed much of what he shared with me. In June, I recorded a memo about my first impression:

It was clear to me that Tristan took great pride in working with X Agency and learned quite a bit from the students at each of his practicum placements (field placements). His travels while in X played a key role in how he understood issues of race and gender for example. His answers were often philosophical and not as personal as other participants. (Jack-Davies Memo Excerpt, June 9, 2010)

Earl saw low-income and minority parents through the lens of work. He considered such parents to be employed in entry-level positions that were not rewarding. He also linked living in poverty to attaining low levels of education, since, in his words, it is “unlikely” that low-income parents would be educated. If they were, a college diploma would be the highest level of education obtained. Earl suggested further that such parents might be out of work or on social assistance:

Anita: So, what comes to mind, you did mention inner-city parents, so my next question is, what comes to mind when you think about inner-city parents?
Earl: Yeah, I guess now we’re going to talk about inner-city in terms of the description of, from the poverty level. And so, these are parents who, they work but they don’t, their jobs aren’t very rewarding or supportive. So they may work at sort of…entry level. They may be educated, but I’d say it’s unlikely that they have… I’d say in general the highest level of education may be a college diploma. I wouldn’t, I’d say most of them don’t have professional degrees. So, if they work it’s… they’re working at menial or entry level positions and not in, so in that context, or they may not work… and they may not have regular work… and then they may not work because they may be disabled or on disability or some form of social assistance. So there’s that side and there are some students who don’t even know what it means for someone in their family to have a job.

Earl’s discusses inner city parents who may be on social assistance or who may be off work due to a disability. These ideologies are problematic at best. Earl’s analysis lacks the recognition that in some areas, low-income parents are also immigrant parents (TDSB, 2010). Such parents may have obtained certification and credentials in their home countries. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) indicated that new immigrants experience difficulty entering into the Canadian job market, arguing that, in Canada, there exist “systemic barriers to the recognition of international qualifications” by employers (p. 21). New immigrants, because they lack Canadian certification in their field of choice, may experience greater difficulty integrating into Canadian society. According to Statistics Canada (2011a), in 2006, the proportion of recent immigrants to Canada who held a university degree was twice as high as native born Canadians.

Earl uses a simplistic approach to his assessment of poverty and its link to employment. He fails to recognize that certification and credentials do not always translate into high paying jobs or employment. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2005) suggested further that racialized groups and immigrants “continue to sustain a double digit income gap of 13.3% and an average after tax income gap of 12.2%” compared to their dominant group counterparts (p. 3). This gap is highest among young males, individuals with less than a high school diploma, and seniors. However, “the gap is evident among the university educated
(median gap 14.6%) as well as those without a post-secondary education (20.6%) suggesting a cross social class factor” (p. 3). They explained that for racialized groups and immigrants, attaining higher levels of education does not automatically fill these earning gaps. Earl’s conceptions of low-income and minority parents could have an impact on any role that he might play in his working with inner city schools. His placement of such parents in an uneducated category creates pedagogical distance that works against conceiving of such parents as partners in the education of students. His narrative reveals further that he may lack theoretical foundations in issues of social inequality and the social factors such as race, gender, and social class that contribute to the unequal life circumstances of Canadians.

Deficit Constructions of Inner City Parents

Several participants used deficit frameworks as the overarching lens to view low income and minority parents. For instance, participants mentioned substance abuse several times, even though my questions did not specifically inquire into such issues. Participants provided this information by answering questions related to different topics. Bredz, in my interview, shared that she sometimes witnessed parents who seemed to be involved in substance abuse “whether it be alcohol, marijuana.” In her narrative, she begins by describing her perceptions of inner city neighbourhoods and describes community residents as “working class people, simple, working class people that I think are not particularly happy.” She then goes on to speak about substance abuse when I asked her to explain her perceptions.

Bredz: And um, perhaps I link it too, as well, substance abuse, in some form, where there’s…whether it be alcohol, marijuana, and I don’t know about any other drugs. But I think, on a typical level, they’re good people, working people. And they’re kind of catching their ass, right, is how I look at it. But they’re getting by, you know.

Anita: Yes, yes. Now why would you say substance abuse? I’m curious about that.
Bredz: I guess because a lot of the parents that I saw…I shouldn’t say a lot. But the parents that I saw, with how they came in, they displayed it. It was…some were drunk. Some were high.

Bredz considers low-income and minority parents to be “good people” who also grapple with issues such as substance abuse. This deficit framing of inner city parents, once again, is not conducive to positioning such parents as partners in their children’s learning.

Madison, who often used a critical conceptual framework to view inner city schooling, suggested that low-income and minority parents dealt with a cross section of issues. She explained that some may emerge from “destroyed families, whether it’s destroyed by the State or destroyed by chemical substances, i.e. alcohol or drugs.” However, Madison suggested that this depended on how issues of drugs and alcohol impacted the family:

Anita: Yes, yes, yes, yes, okay, so I’m just flagging that [the time]. All right so let’s move on, and we can meet again [participant only had a limited amount of time on her lunch break to spend during the interview] just so that you’re not feeling like, you know…so what comes to mind when I say the term inner city parents?

Madison: Often times the people that you have in there, have been low income for generations…they may or may not realize that whatever paths that they’re walking…[they] are creating another generation of children with less opportunity. Whether that is in terms of…just depends on the stereotypes of the alcohol use and the drug use in the family; which takes away income, which will allow you to live in a better area, which takes away resource time from the parent to try and support the children in their education better.

Madison explains that issues of drugs and alcohol may be stereotypes about low-income families. Her narrative speaks to the systemic and generational aspect of poverty that is similar to Earl’s assertion that some inner city students are raised in families where they do not know “what it means for someone in their family to have a job.”

These narratives point to a deficit construction of inner city parents that suggests that they are not in control. This lack of control has negative consequences for their leadership in families and for the relationship between families and schools. Such a discourse works to
construct the home lives of low-income and minority student as problematic and their parents as unfit. Such readings place all education responsibilities onto schools since low income and minority parents are cast as unable to address the learning needs of their children. The discursive practices that spill out from such constructions can be seen when schools take sole ownership of student learning without inviting inner city parents to share in this responsibility.

On the other hand, Andy’s perceptions of inner city parents were informed by his views of his own parents. He conceived of low-income and minority parents as being hard working. Andy explained that he took offense to a Host Teacher’s complaint about inner city parents who do not attend their children’s parent-teacher interviews:

Anita: Now, you spoke a little bit about parents, but my next question is, what comes to mind when I say the term inner city parents?

Andy: Um, so from my own experience, and as well from things I’ve heard, parents definitely work very hard and they may not be home, let’s say, at night when the students get there (parents). Um, and I mean, actually, one thing that came to mind with the class management question was that one way that I would want to start off the year was by calling parents and introducing myself, but I also thought a lot of parents might not be at home at that time. And so, making sure that you’re flexible, um, leaving a message and being able to introduce yourself at any time. I realized a lot of the teachers, my Associate Teachers [Host Teachers], would say, “Well, so and so should come to parent-teacher interviews.” And…because, I mean…I observed my Host Teacher doing parent-teacher interviews, and so that was one comment which was a bit disturbing to myself. However, not something I made obvious, but something that I thought, well, some of them might not be able to because they’re working.

Andy is disturbed by the Host Teacher’s lack of understanding concerning the responsibilities of low-income and minority parents with respect to work. Later in the interview, he shared that the one thing that he learned about inner city schools while being on his field placement was how not to react to inner city parents. The modeling that his Host Teacher provided sent powerful messages about her own attitude toward such parents:
Anita: What about learning that took place for you about inner city schools on your practicum [field placement]? Like, was there anything on your practicum that you walked away feeling, “Wow, you know, I just saw something or something clicked for me about an inner city schooling situation, or context, or problem that I could have only learned by being, you know, on this practicum”?

Andy: Well, I mean, one thing was definitely the parent-teacher interviews, the one I mentioned before, and seeing how not to react as a teacher, and to be understanding of a parents’ situation. So that was definitely something I came out really saying… “Wow, I can't believe this is happening.” Um, another thing that I knew beforehand, um, but I saw throughout my practicum was really how willingly parents really did want to help their students…I’m sorry, their children, um, to be better, and, uh, coming to speak to the teachers even during the day, um, because they worked at night. And taking the opportunity to do that… that was definitely something that I saw there, but I also saw it in my experience in elementary school while I was a student.

Andy’s narrative further reveals that, for this Host Teacher, inner city parents are discursively cast as uncaring, even though he witnessed parents taking the time to inquire about their children’s education.

Britzman (1991) argued that “for some teacher educators, the university must undo what student teachers learn in school contexts” (p. 175). The Host Teacher, as mentor and model, could have explained to Andy that there are several reasons why parents do not and cannot attend parent teacher conferences. Instead, the Host Teacher judges and blames low-income and minority parents and leaves a lasting impression with Andy. A more productive strategy would have been for the Host Teacher to demonstrate to Andy that she, with the help of her administrative team, is able to offer alternative times when the interviews can be conducted, instead of giving Andy the impression that the situation could not be remedied. This would have demonstrated the Host Teacher’s willingness to work with parents to ensure that student needs are met. Had Andy not witnessed first-hand that inner city parents are committed to their children’s education, this Host Teacher’s words could have been interpreted as representing the “truth” about such parents.
Myth One: Inner City Parents Do Not Value Education

Like the cultural myth of the inner city student as challenging and out of control, the myth of inner city parents as not caring about their children’s education is one that circulates within the wider culture. This myth appeared in various forms across several narratives in this research. Participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of inner city parents’ interactions with schools:

Anita: All right. Now, my next question was to tell me about these parents, but you did. Was there anything else you wanted to add in terms of, tell me about them in terms of their interaction with school, interaction with the teachers, students?

Earl: I think in our sort of school… I would, I don’t want to generalize, but again speaking about these things, I’d say for most of them [inner city parents] the interaction with the school takes one of two forms, I think. One I’m going to talk about is sort of a… general sort of stereotype, as much as I don’t want to do that. But, so that one is a negative…it’s a negative relationship with school in terms of the parent may not have had a positive experience in school. The parent may not see the value of education, in terms of, like, “You have to be in school, so you’re in school, but what are you doing after that cause this [the working world] is real life kind of thing.”

It is fascinating to note that for Earl, inner city parents may not see the value of education. This narrative of low-income and minority parents valuing the “real world” over education is hegemonically consistent with his other narratives. The underlying message of his narrative is one that suggests that low-income and minority parents are more committed to work as opposed to their children’s learning.

Using Earl’s narrative, if inner city parents value the real world at the expense of formalized schooling, they will be less supportive of their children’s learning. I cite the research literature once again to illustrate that participants in Trier (2005) believed that inner city parents “wouldn’t care about their children’s education” (p. 175). One participant in Groulx (2001) expressed desire to “work in schools where the students have parents who are interested in their children and also in really helping their learning process” (p. 76). It is clear
that Earl’s conceptions of inner city parents confirm these findings on pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city schooling. Yet, Reay (2004) emphasized that “parents are increasingly encouraged to become...active partners in the production of educated children” (p. 76). Grant (2002) argued that, as a result of the negative portrayal of inner city and urban parents in popular films, “pre-service teachers who would never believe themselves to be guilty of holding stereotypes about urban ethnic groups may find themselves agreeing that ‘those parents just don’t care about their kids’” (p. 88).

Earl’s view of low-income and minority parents impacts how he conceives of the motivation of parents with respect to their children’s education. This perceived lack of support on the part of such parents impacts the role that teachers are asked to play in schools. In this scenario, the teacher is constructed as the hero and the lone figure who cares about the education of inner city students (Grant, 2002). This perceived lack of support on the part of inner city and urban parents affects the orientation of entire schools toward parental involvement. An orientation that positions low income and minority parents as not caring about education, impacts the entire culture of a school, and can make a difference in the extent to which parents are invited to take part in their children’s learning.

No Parents Allowed: The Exclusion of Low-Income Parents from Schools

During my interview with Bredz, she explained that parents were not allowed on the premises at one of her field placement. I probed further to fully understand the circumstances surrounding the school’s unofficial policy. I include some data previously presented because Bredz’ explanation was provided in response to a question about her perceptions of inner city neighbourhoods:
Bredz: Something that I absolutely hated was I felt that the staff were against these parents. In the inner city school, parents were not allowed in the school at all. It was not…doors were locked to parents.

Anita: Really?

Bredz: It was absurd to me

Anita: Okay

Bredz: There was no community in the sense that I felt that the teachers didn’t really help each other out. And in no way did they work with the parents

Later during the interview, Bredz raised the point again when she discusses the fact that her Host Teacher acted differently in the presence of parents. Bredz explained that because parents weren’t allowed in the school, teachers responded to their presence by suggesting that they were unwelcome on the school’s premises:

Bredz: It had a lot to do with the teacher. The grade six teacher that I saw, she had contact with the kid’s parents. And I felt that it was another face that she put on with them

Anita: Interesting

Bredz: That wasn’t what she showed me as a teacher. She was very open and all… [it was] what she showed the children. It was just like a face, kind of like “Yeah, hello, uh-huh, I see you. You’re in the room. You’re not supposed to be here. And what is it that.”

Anita: Now, tell me something, no seriously. I don’t mean to interrupt you. But what do you mean “they’re not supposed to be there”? Because I don’t… honestly, I don’t understand. Like I physically…am reacting to what you’re saying right now because…because to me, this is just…I’m speechless right now. What do you mean by they’re not supposed to be there?

Bredz: I don’t know when it started. I don’t know what the cause was from when I walked into that classroom on…I think it was the end of November, mid November. The parents were not allowed in the school. Doors were locked. Parents were not allowed in the school. If they had any concerns or anything, they were to call in to the secretary’s office and make an appointment to meet with the teacher or make an appointment to meet with the principal or whatever their concerns were. They were simply, it was understood. It was even written in the newsletter that they were not supposed…parents were not supposed to be on the premises

164
Anita: But what… as a teacher candidate [pre-service teacher] were you given any kind or rationale? For example, “We’ve had an incident in the past where ‘X’ happened. Because of that, you know, now we decided that this is the best way.” What rationale did they have?

Bredz: Nothing really that I can…and I have quite a good memory. Nothing that was discussed to the point that I got a story behind it.

Anita: Amazing.

Bredz: But there were many, many, many stories

Anita: Right, yeah

Bredz: I think it just came at a point one day. And I believe that it must be from the principal and the vice-principal, which the principal was running two schools as well, and I felt that her job is not humanly possible. And I think that this was her way of trying to maintain conduct between her parents and her staff. “Let me just put an end to this [the feuding between teachers and parents] because I can’t be the mediator between these two parties. Represent myself [the principal] as well as my parents.”

Anita: But tell me something. Why such a…why such a divide? Why…you know because in my experience, I haven’t been at a school so far where parents were not allowed in. So I guess I’m hearing this. I’m a little bit surprised because…and I believe you, okay. I believe you. It’s just that… I guess I’m just thinking, well, if a parent is not inside the school, what does that do to students?

Bredz: Definitely

Anita: What does it do to teachers? How does it impact the whole school because parents are the parents of the children that attend, right?

Bredz: Well last time I felt what do you mean [that the parents aren’t allowed]? I mean how are these children supposed to feel? Now don’t get me wrong. Parents were in the school, in the sense that if they had to come and drop off lunch for a kid that was late

Anita: Yes

Bredz: Or they [the parents] came in and they didn’t care. They just walked right in to the classroom.

Anita: Yes, yes

Bredz: And there was no security guard to say

Anita: Of course, of course, of course. I know what…
Bredz: Restraining parents

Anita: Excuse me. I know what you mean

Bredz: It was understood that they were not allowed in the school.

It is clear from a close reading of Bredz’ narrative, that schools are experienced differently, depending on a parent’s social class standing. According to Grant (2002), parents of urban children “have generally experienced a lifetime of unsatisfying relations with various institutions like schools, which are intended to provide help” (p. 87). She argued that in popular film, parents rarely appear and when they do, they “abuse and neglect their children” (p. 87). Audiences are rarely given an opportunity to learn about parental views on “the school, the institution, and government authority in general” (p. 87).

The school’s placement of this unofficial policy in the school’s newsletter is also telling of the extent to which the school administrators wished to keep parents away. Tara was also placed at the same school for her field placement. She confirmed Bredz’ description of the school’s policy. The school’s policy is an exercise in power that spatially places low-income and minority parents at the fringes of their children’s learning. Reay (2004) wrote that “leaving children’s education to the school has become ‘a thing of the past’ or the sign of ‘very bad parenting’ within both contemporary education policy and middle-class common sense understandings” (p. 79). The school’s unofficial policy denies low-income parents the right that they have to be present at the school, depending on the issue at hand.

Forcing parents to call the school’s secretary to make an appointment in order to talk to teachers restricts the informal access that parents often have to teachers. This access is understood and is claimed as a right by middle-class parents (Reay, 2007). The newsletter places this unofficial policy in writing, creating the perception that it is indeed official. Having to contact a secretary to book an appointment to see a teacher spatially takes parents
out of the school until they are expected and planned for. This policy functions to keep parents in their place. It controls when they can visit the school and the manner in which they can gain this access. Bredz uses the term “understood” to explain that everyone knew that parents were to be excluded, even if the rationale for this exclusion was not clear to Bredz in her role as pre-service teacher. The fact that their exclusion was understood suggests also that it did not have to be explicitly articulated. The newsletter discursively established the exclusion of parents. The accompanying discursive practices, being forced to call the secretary for appointments and receiving terse communication from teachers when arriving at the school unannounced, further worked to reinforce their exclusion.

**Conclusion**

Hegemonic conceptions of inner city parents as poorly educated, having demeaning jobs, and as lacking interest in their children’s education are steeped in deficit ideologies about what it means to live in poverty and what it means to raise children in poverty. Andy’s critique of these portraits of inner city parents as not caring, provides a counter-narrative to this commonly held assumption. Bredz’ witnessing of the manner in which inner city parents were excluded from her field placement suggests that issues of social class play an important role in how some parents experience schools, how they are treated by schools, and the manner in which they are invited to work as partners in the education of their children.

The data presented in this chapter reveal that some low-income parents are spatially shunned in schools and made Other. This shunning places them outside of schools, physically and conceptually. This displacement (Delaney, 2002; McKittrick, 2006) means that their ability to inform how schools are run and how school policies are made, and their knowing about their own children, is drastically reduced. Weiner (2002) indicated that urban
school systems are often seen as places “intentionally isolated from parent and community influence” (p. 258). The school becomes the domain of the learn-ed. It becomes a space where parents must hand over their children to be educated by “those who know better.” This handing over of low-income and minority children means that the school itself becomes a space where parent voices are rendered silent.

If parents are silent, schools are able to work “on behalf of” parents and students, without the authentic voices and visions of parents at the table. In fact, in some cases, as the data reveal, in some cases, parents are not invited to sit at the table at all. This works to construct inner city schools as spaces where teachers and administrators are “in charge” with parents and students who follow the rules. In this process, parents are placed at the same level as students, and simply follow orders. The relationship is an unequal one with parents who are relegated to a status that is less than that of teachers.

Parents’ ways of knowing are deemed unimportant and irrelevant to what is happening in the school. This is emphasized further when the parents are racialized or from an immigrant background (Reay, 2004). While many schools in the province of Ontario have created active and thriving parent-councils (Ministry of Education, 2001), where parents are able to work cooperatively with schools, these councils are dependent upon the culture of the school and the community where the school is located. Therefore, such councils do not always ensure that parents’ voices are represented in schools. Chapter seven examines participant conceptions of inner city teachers using Britzman’s (1991) theory about popular myths surrounding classroom teachers within the broader culture.
Chapter Seven

“They Can’t Teach Anywhere Else!”
A Spatial Mapping of the Inner City Teacher

Introduction

Britzman (1991) theorized that cultural myths offer ideal images that are “taken as measures of thought, affect and practice” (p. 6). These myths also create particular discursive practices that “position situations as given” (p. 6). Like the cultural myth that the inner city schools is an unruly place (Reay, 2007) and inner city students are out of control, the inner city teacher can be read using mythologies that are tied to notions of knowledge and expertise, as well as to notions of place. In this chapter I use Britzman’s (1991) analysis of the cultural myths surrounding teachers. I pay specific attention to the inner city teacher as a mythological figure using the narratives of participants. I analyze these myths through geographies of schooling by discussing the ways in which these myths can be understood with respect to place.

Britzman (1991) argued that “stereotypes engender a static and hence repressed notion of identity as something already out there” (p. 37). Over time, “trapped within these images,” teacher identity becomes essentialized and meanings surrounding the teacher that are socially constructed begin to be read as “innate and natural” (p. 5). She presented three myths surrounding teachers that inform how pre-service teachers are socialized into the teaching profession. Such myths include everything depends on the teacher, teacher as expert, and teacher as self made. I place these three myths in italics to distinguish them from the myths that
I present in this research surrounding the teacher who teaches at an inner city school. As in the previous chapter, I employ the use of the term “inner city” once again because the term itself is closely tied to these particular teacher constructions.

Britzman (1991) argued that the *everything depends on the teacher* myth relies on notions of teacher authority and control in the confined space of the classroom. The ability of a teacher to establish and maintain control is essential to the teacher being viewed as competent by peers and the school’s administration. The *teacher as expert* myth locates all knowledge with the teacher. This creates a situation where teachers are expected to “know what to teach and…everything there is to know about the material” (p. 225). This myth perpetuates a thirst for “tricks of the trade” and “toolkit model” teaching strategies that can be easily applied to any classroom context. It reinforces the technical-rational orientation (Giroux, 1981) of teaching at the expense of conceptual knowledge where there are no formulas that a teacher must follow (Lewis, in conversation).

Myth three, *teachers are self made*, suggests that teachers are born and their personality traits are integral to their success. These traits are essential to who they are. They are not developed with time or experience. This myth, “functions to devalue any meaningful attempt to make relevant teacher education, educational theory” and the social aspects of education (p. 230). In this chapter, I present archetypes of the inner city teacher as discussed by each participant. The archetypes of inner city teachers differ from archetypes of teachers to the extent that these identities are informed by the inner city school as a particular place where the inner city teacher works. It is this spatial reading of the inner city teacher’s work that is integral to the myths surrounding this teaching stereotype.

In this chapter I ask participants these questions: What do you see when you hear the term “inner city teacher”? and What does this teacher look like? The data revealed that
pre-service teacher conceptions of inner city teachers fell into several broad themes that I present as five cultural myths. I encase my first usage of each cultural myth in quotation marks; however, for readability, I do not use quotation marks for subsequent usages.

The first myth describes the inner city teacher as a “saviour of at-risk students.” The second myth constructs the inner city teachers as a “fish out of water.” Using the third myth, the inner city teacher is simply “waiting for retirement.” The four myth sees the inner city teacher as “young, old, and without family.” The final myth portrays the inner city teacher as “dud: they can’t teach anywhere else.” Whether or not these archetypes exist in reality, I argue in this chapter that these myths are informed by wider cultural myths about teachers in general, as theorized by Weber and Mitchell, (1995).

Weber and Mitchell (1995) argued that there is little scholarly work on “the importance of popular stereotypes of teacher’s work and identity” (p. 27). They suggested that there is “a tendency, however, to oversimplify the socializing nature of cultural imagery, reducing it to a one-dimensional bogey-man to be disdained, fought, or most often, simply ignored” (p. 27). The researchers indicated that teacher education professors often work to dispel myths deeply held by pre-service teachers about teachers. These beliefs are gained through their prior experience with teachers in schools and through their socialization on field placements. The researchers cited early work by Mead who argued that stereotypes of teachers in popular culture and in one’s childhood experiences “play a formative role in the evolution of a teacher’s identity, and are part of the enculturation of teachers into their profession” (Mead in Weber & Mitchell, p. 27).
Myth One: Inner City Teacher as Saviour of At-Risk Students

Tristan’s narrative revealed a sense in which the inner city teacher must “save” what he referred to as at-risk students. He described the inner city teacher as someone who is “a little bit more resilient,” a “believer,” and “a little bit battered on the edges.” For Tristan, the inner city teacher, because she/he is dealing with at-risk students, has various pressures to deal with. Here, the reader can see that the inner city teacher is a believer because at-risk students need someone who believes in them. The inner city teacher has to be a person who is resilient because teaching at-risk students puts a teacher in danger of burnout. A teacher working in such schools is also a bit battered on the edges because over time, so the narrative goes, working with students in such a context begins to wear down the teacher. The inner city teacher has no identity of her/his own. This identity is derived solely from the “conditions” that this teacher faces at the inner city school:

Tristan: So, I use to be a believer, but a cynic now [this is the inner city teacher speaking] I’m just a sceptic right… I am trying to make it more positive cause you know if you have X amount of things to deal with, whether it’s the economic differences or pressures or cultural pressures, or is there heavy drug use that… I think can occur anywhere, not just in the inner city school, but all these pressures on the efficiency of being a teacher, but, you want to be effective because, you know, with the folks most at risk…how much effort do you put in to save one student when you have a class of thirty, and you have four classes and you’ve got to do the work and find a balance?

Tristan’s narrative reveals that the inner city teacher faces both economic and cultural pressures that are created, as a result of teaching at-risk students. I read the term “culture’ in this context as a coded term (Li, 2005) for racial diversity once again. What is fascinating about Tristan’s narrative is that he mentions heavy drug use by students as a pressure that confronts inner city teachers. In an earlier narrative, Tristan explained that he witnessed this on his field placement. Notice that his narrative fails to identify any academic skill that the
inner city teacher should possess. For example, he does not discuss the inner city teacher with specific reference to subject knowledge expertise or teaching ability. This might suggest a sense in which the inner city teacher’s role may not connect in any way to curriculum and pedagogy that impact student learning.

Tristan then questions the extent to which one teacher can save at-risk inner city students. While his use of “save” can be read through a lens of inner city teachers providing the pedagogical tools for inner city students to be successful, he does not say this. His use of the term suggests that these particular students must be rescued from an ill-fated outcome. This ideology of teachers saving inner city and urban students is discussed thoroughly in the research literature (Grant, 2002; Groulx 2001; McIntyre, 1997). Hampton et al. (2008) indicated that pre-service teachers in their study often relied on their individual effort as opposed to larger institutional responsibilities to save urban schools. The researchers explained that these conceptions must be critically examined since such views can have negative consequences for teacher wishing to teach in such contexts:

Unless these larger forces that impact urban schools are understood, it is not hard to create the perception that individuals—rather than institutions—are responsible for the success and failure of urban schools. These perceptions can lead those considering a teaching career either to develop an inflated sense of self and see urban teaching as a “noble” mission to “save” students...or to feel powerless and overwhelmed by the sheer prospect of teaching in an urban setting. (Hampton et al., 2008, p. 289)

Madison described the teacher-as-saviour narrative as the worst-case scenario with respect to stereotypes about inner city teachers. Madison explained that such stereotypes also included what I call teacher-as-inspiration who returns to inner city communities to give back. Madison also described a stereotype of the inner city teacher as teacher as dud (they can’t teach anywhere else). In her counter-narrative, Madison shared that the teacher-as-saviour archetype is based on the premise that such teachers must help poor inner city students to become “better people”:
Anita: So I’m just going to finish off with two questions right now. The first one is what do you see when you hear the term inner city teacher and then what does this teacher look like?

Madison: There are two types of inner city teachers, maybe even three. I’ll start off with my worst case scenario. The worst case scenario is the teacher that is going to save the world. They are going there from the goodness of their heart. They are doing this because they know better. They don’t have respect. They know better. They know the best way to do it and we should feel wonderful for them for going to do this. What did they look like? You know I’ve seen them in all different guises, but I think the key point is that, that patronizing…that viewpoint that they’re coming from ‘on high’ to help these poor little people here [motions down low] to be better people.

Madison’s narrative reveals her recognition that the teacher as saviour ideology is one that casts inner city students as deficient in some ways. She explains that this is a “patronizing” viewpoint. Her narrative shows that the teacher as saviour archetype does not approach the inner city student with respect. These teachers “know better,” she says. Key to her analysis is that this teacher approaches inner city students from a moral position that is “on high.”

Lewis (in conversation) argues that the “teacher as hero” figure is a popular representation of teachers in film. Research by Weber and Mitchell (1995) explain that in Hollywood films, teachers are often romanticized as heroic. The teachers of films are often cast as being different from ordinary teachers through “innovative pedagogy and curriculum” (p. 88). The heroic teacher is often a substitute or stand-in teacher who liberates students from the usual curriculum, usually has sudden insights into teaching that enable him/her to connect with students, is often in conflict with the ordinary teachers, and films often culminate with a heroic final scene that involves student achievement.

McIntyre (1997) also found this narrative represented in her research on Whiteness with pre-service teachers. Participants in her study articulated that they wanted to take the inner city students home in order to give them a better life. In Canada, research by Schick (2000) demonstrates this tendency of pre-service teachers to see themselves as fulfilling a
heroic role with low-income and minority students. Schick (2000) explained, “participants relate a variety of stories about the heroic interventions of teachers in the lives of students, fantasizing that teachers save lost children, care for the unlovable, work miracles when others would give up” (p. 307).

However, researchers contend that the teacher as hero figure as seen in Hollywood films such as Freedom Writers (LaGravanese, 2007) and Dangerous Minds (Smith, 2005) and in television shows like Boston Public (Kelly, 2000) can be read as racialized narratives. In this narrative, the teacher is portrayed as a White knight who must save racialized students from their parents and from themselves (Banks & Esposito, 2002; Freedman & Easley, 2004), and from teachers who are duds (Lewis, in conversation). Freedman and Easley (2004), writing about the television show Boston Public, argued that while students are read in terms of race, behaviour, and socio-economic status, “teachers remain invisible in popular understandings of urban schooling except when taken up as altruistic hero” (p. 76).

Banks and Esposito (2002) suggested that in television, as in film, teachers are constructed as heroes who are usually White, and who work to rescue Black, Latino, and poor students. They explained that in Boston Public, Harvey Lipshultz, an elderly male teacher, often makes racist and derogatory remarks to racialized students, whom he often refers to as “desegs,” a derogatory racial slur (p. 240). However, the show employs various strategies to explain away his racism. Harry Senate is portrayed as a young, White male teacher who embodies the persona of the “Great White Hope.” The researchers explain that this character closely resembles the main character Lou-Anne Johnson in the film Dangerous Minds (Smith, 2005). Freedman and Easley (2004) wrote that the Harry Senate character uses unconventional pedagogical practices such as using a shotgun in class and forming a suicide
club for students. Banks and Esposito (2002) explained that the show depicts the measures that White teachers are willing to take in order to save racialized students.

One of Harry’s purposes in this television series is to illustrate, on the surface, the lengths a White teacher will go to save students of color. Below the surface, however, are taken-for-granted positions about race and race relations, as well as gender relations. (Banks & Esposito, 2002, p. 241)

The authors noted that Harry is not only depicted as saving racialized students, especially male African American and Latino students; but, his actions are always in the best interest of the students. To viewers, his moral authority rests with the fact that he is White, middle-class, and male. Harry Senate’s heroic character is sustained using an ideology that suggests that he is willing to do what racialized parents are not willing to do for their own children.

**Myth Two: Inner City Teacher as “Fish Out of Water”**

Earl described the inner city teacher as a fish out of water in the inner city school. I argue that this construction has relevancy only when it is using a raced-based lens of the inner city teacher as White and therefore out of place in the inner city school. Earl’s articulation of this myth must also be understood in relation to the inner city school itself as a particular place that is dangerous and “foreign” to the teacher. This space is unsafe for White, middle-class teachers, but especially for White female teachers who make up the majority of Canada’s teaching profession. The teacher is a fish out of water because the teacher is new to the community and is not of the community. As an outsider, both spatially and culturally, the teacher must come in and save the day. This also links back to the teacher as saviour myth. During my interview with Earl, it was clear that for him, choosing to teach at an inner city school was not a choice at all since teachers rarely make inner city schools their first choice:
Anita: We’re going to move on to talk about the inner-city teacher. What do you see when you hear the term inner-city teacher?

Earl: To be honest, honestly again… going back to the movies and those… what’s that one, *Freedom Writers* or whatever… And Mr. Holland is the professor and it’s just, and it’s bad. And one of my mom’s favourite movies is *To Sir with Love*, with Sidney Poitier in it. With those movies… it’s always, like… the “fish out of water.” It’s like, but often in those movies it’s not that person’s [the teacher’s] choice, first off, to teach in those schools. It was always some circumstance that came about that, you know, they had a falling out and this was the only job they could get or something like that. They’re there against their will and that definitely helps the drama and the comedy and stuff of movies because of the whole “fish out of water” scenario, but I think that’s interesting because that…because for the general public at large, we don’t think of someone wanting to teach in that environment. And so I think… that informs the perception that, so maybe… I think the students… it’s like…, “Why would you want to teach there?” Doesn’t everyone want a nice… again… no one is facing barriers to education? We can just go, seek, and explore knowledge and all that wonderful stuff.

Earl’s narrative is revealing. First, he admits that films informed his opinions. Grant (2002) explained that popular culture “shapes and reflects the beliefs of Americans [and Canadians], particularly those of young people accustomed to receiving significant amounts of visual information” (p. 78). She suggested further that popular film images “reflect and shape the assumptions with which pre-service teachers enter urban classrooms” (p. 78).

Immediately into his narrative, Earl recognizes that the depiction of inner city teachers in some school films is “bad.” Earl provides the title for this dissertation when he asks, “Why would you want to teach there?” He explains that the teachers in these films are often portrayed as someone who does not choose to be in an inner city setting. Instead, this teacher ends up teaching at the inner city school against his/her will. This is a telling assertion because it suggests that teachers working at inner city schools have few options to teach elsewhere. This spatially constructs the inner city school as an undesirable space or as academic waste (Reay, 2007) where “anyone” can end up. Reay (2007) wrote that both inner city schools and the communities that surround them are constituted as unruly places such that “both are represented within middle-class and wider social imaginaries as demonized
repositories for social waste” (p. 1195). Notice Earl’s observation when he says that in film, the teacher has “a falling out,” presumably at the character’s place of work. The teacher ends up at the inner city school because it is the only job that the teacher can find. This, he says, adds to the drama that the producers of films need in order to make the plot an interesting one.

Using Earl’s example, the new hire to the inner city school is able to work without any specialized training. Teacher education programs, subject specialties, teachables, and university degrees are rarely mentioned in such films. This relates to Britzman’s (1991) notion of the inner city teacher as self made. As self-made, the teacher’s identity, not the teacher’s ability, dictates success in the classroom. At another point during the interview, Earl shared his sense that the inner city teacher was White because of the predominance of White teachers in Canada’s teaching profession. In the film *Freedom Writers* (LaGravanese, 2007), the main character, Mrs. Gruwell, is portrayed as a fish out of water because she is new to inner city Los Angeles. Not only is she not from the community itself, but also she is constructed as encountering students of a different racial and social class background for the first time in her life. Her new-ness in this racialized space makes sense only because of her racial identity. The film relies on the audiences’ understanding that White bodies are out of place in the inner city. These bodies are not portrayed as being *of* this space, in the same way in which racialized bodies are naturally mapped onto the inner city and the inner city school. The White teacher’s body in the inner city is hegemonically read as foreign, unfamiliar, and as *not* belonging.

Hegemonic readings of the racialized inner city teacher would construct such teachers as being *in place* in the inner city and the inner city school. Therefore, the White teacher in such films is used to juxtapose the teacher’s race with the racial makeup of the
school itself. The teacher’s Whiteness is also used as a spatial juxtaposition because this teacher, who lives elsewhere, perhaps in a suburban community, is entering the inner city school and community for the first time. In this way, I argue that the teacher’s Whiteness plays an important role in creating distance between the teacher’s identity and the identity of students. Thus, the fish out of water narrative relies on hegemonic notions of race and place for its legitimacy.

A racialized teacher would work less in the fish out of water myth because there would be less drama. The racialized teacher’s body would not provide the level of racial and spatial contrast that a White teaching body does. With respect to race, the White teacher’s body is mapped onto a backdrop of Black and Latino student bodies, as Grant (2002) argued. The White teaching body also provides spatial contrast because this body is portrayed as a suburban body. This juxtaposition between the White teacher’s racial body and the spatialities that this White body represents, such as suburban spaces and nature-based landscapes, is mapped against the racialized, urban jungle of the inner city. This provides that drama in school films about which Earl speaks.

Earl’s assertion also has implications for the ways in which new teachers construct their own teacher identities. Optimistic new teachers might not see themselves teaching in an inner city schooling context simply because of these popular media portrayals of the inner city school as a place that is reserved for teachers who have no other choice. Hopeful new teachers do not have to concern themselves with teaching at such schools because many may believe that they do, in fact, have options at the start of their careers. As new graduates with options, they do not need to place themselves in schools reserved for teachers who lack choices.
That said, research shows that although many new teachers may not desire to teach at schools that serve low-income and minority students, they often end up in such schools depending on job market options available to them (Grant, 2002; Groulx, 2001; Obidah & Howard, 2005). The realities of the job market in any given year, often dictate whether a new teacher accepts a position at an inner city school, if at all. Yet, because of the teaching myth that the teacher has all the knowledge (Britzman, 1991), Grant (2002) explained that new teachers often wish to defer teaching in inner city schools until they gain more teaching experience. The inner city school is perceived to be a more challenging teaching environment (Weiner, 1993).

Earl goes on to suggest that the general public would prefer to teach in a school where there are no “barriers” and where the teacher can “go, seek, and explore knowledge.” Earl assumes that all new teachers consider inner city teaching problematic when he asks, “Doesn’t everyone want a nice, again, no one is facing barriers to education?” His narrative identifies students with barriers to their education as being students that “everyone” would not want to teach, when in fact, there are teachers who actively seek out and choose to dedicate their life’s work as inner city teachers (Lewis, in conversation).

A final comment surrounding Earl’s narrative is his link between teaching at the inner city school and exploring knowledge as a teacher. When Earl explains that everyone would prefer to teach in a school where there are no barriers to education such that teachers can go, seek, and explore knowledge, he is suggesting that teaching at an inner city school means that knowledge is explored less so, than in spaces where the students face no barrier to their education. It is as though to teach in this context, and to teach particular student bodies in this context, displaces knowledge to a secondary position that would be sustained if the teaching environment was elsewhere, such as in a suburban school.
I cite here research by Groulx (2001) that asked pre-service teachers to rate their comfort level teaching in urban, suburban and private school settings. Participant conceptions about knowledge and learning in suburban and private school settings illustrate the extent to which knowledge and learning are mapped onto these spaces, and not onto the inner city and urban school:

These children [in the suburban school] most likely have experienced more things, and I think that would increase application thought processes,

This environment [the suburban school] is very conducive to learning and teaching with wonderful materials,

and

This [private school] would allow you to exercise all the skills you’ve learned and actually see students, teachers, and parents working together. (Groulx, 2001, p. 76)

These excerpts are telling. They reveal the attitudes of particular pre-service teachers toward teaching and learning that is strictly dependent on geography. In the first excerpt, the experiences of suburban students are seen as increasing their “application thought processes.” In the second quote, the suburban setting itself is described as being “conducive to learning.” This essentializes this space such that knowledge and learning are mapped onto suburban students, even if such students are not interested in learning or face barriers to their learning. Notice that in the final excerpt, the participant emphasizes that the private school setting is the place where she/he can “exercise all the skills” learned in becoming a teacher. The absence of discourse on learning and teaching in the urban and inner city setting, combined with its presence in discussions about the suburban and private school contexts, speak to the extent to which learning and knowledge are written out of inner city schooling spaces with respect to the pedagogy of teachers. The above excerpts must be read with attention paid to the fact that the narratives about learning, and suburban and private
school contexts, are ones that are racially based. Suburban and private schools, especially in the United States, are spaces that I argue, are constructed as predominantly White.

**Myth Three: Inner City Teacher as “Waiting for Retirement”**

Tara described inner city teachers that she observed on her field placement as “comfortable.” She discussed a sense in which inner city teachers were new to the profession or simply waiting to retire:

Anita: When you hear the term…so let’s move on to the teacher. When you hear the terms…uh, sorry. What do you see when you hear the term inner city teacher? What comes to mind or what are your thoughts on that? Who is an inner city teacher if you could describe that…

Tara: If you look at X School Board, I feel like the inner city teachers are usually the newer teachers, or the teachers who are just comfortable there. Like, with X School it’s the teachers who started there ten years ago, and they’re just comfortable…and they’re not, like, they’re gonna retire there, they’re not gonna move on. They’re just…that’s where they are now. And I feel like that…and it’s such a bad thing for the kids. Because I’m, like… they, like…they don’t really care.

For Tara, given her admission that she has little exposure to inner city schools, inner city teachers were “comfortable.” She also explains that these teachers did not care about the students. This is similar to Earl’s narrative of inner city teachers who are punching a clock. Both metaphors, waiting for retirement and punching a clock, conjure images of teachers who lack motivation and inspiration. The punching a clock metaphor brings to mind images of repetition and monotony. The waiting for retirement metaphor conjures images of boredom, lack of initiative, and powerlessness. Both images work to negatively construct the inner city teacher as lacking passion, lacking motivation, and worst of all, lacking inspiration. The net effect of this discourse is the portrait of inner city teachers as ineffective at what they do because they have lost their will to teach.
The waiting for retirement archetype stands in stark contrast to Britzman’s (1991) myths of *everything depends on the teacher* and *teacher as expert*. Both rely on constructions of the teacher as the person who has knowledge that is then shared with students. In both these myths, the teacher is the qualified expert who is able to transfer that knowledge onto students. Despite the fact that this banking model is problematic with respect to its negation of the knowledge that students bring to their own learning, *everything depends on the teacher* and *teacher as expert* confer a certain type of status onto the teacher. This status could be seen through the teacher as learn-ed and as the bearer of knowledge that students need.

In contrast, the waiting for retirement myth removes status from the inner city teacher. This archetype relegates the inner city teacher’s expertise, if at all, to a thing of the past. It positions the teacher’s expertise to a time when the teacher first arrived at the inner city school. Using this myth, the inner city teacher is no longer an expert or at least is not perceived to be one because her/his passion for teaching has been lost. The waiting for retirement myth takes away any sense that the inner city teacher is an educator with the expertise that is mapped onto the teacher.

**Myth Four: The Inner City Teacher as Young or Old and Without Family**

Both Tara and Earl conceived of the inner city teacher as young or new to the teaching profession. Earl also discussed his view that inner city teachers would not have families. Tara’s sense that the inner city teacher is young or new to the profession is an important consideration for how she constructs who teaches at an inner city school. I argue that this myth of the inner city teacher as young, speaks once again to the complexities that are mapped onto the inner city teaching environment. These complexities mean that experienced teachers may not be attracted to such schools and that only new teachers eager
to begin their careers, will accept teaching positions in schooling spaces where experienced teachers do not wish to be. This notion of inner city teachers are young is not an innocent observation on the part of participants, because new teachers lack teaching experience, especially in the area of classroom management. This myth must be read by asking about those schooling practices that contribute to new teachers, as opposed to experienced ones, being hired for work at inner city schools. In addition, if indeed young, inexperienced teachers are disproportionately hired at inner city schools, which teachers are left out of the hiring process and why? Earl described the inner city teacher as either young or old, and without family.

Anita: So what does this teacher look like?

Earl: I find that if they have small kids or if they’re starting… having their own families and maybe they’re looking for a more stable school environment or one that is maybe closer to where they’re living as well… and themselves being professionals, they aren’t living necessarily in what we would consider the inner-city area, geographically, or in terms of economic status. So maybe that’s why they’re not…so I don’t picture people teaching in an inner-city school having a family as much. I don’t know if that’s strange.

An analysis of Earl’s narrative reveals that he once again relies of film for meaning. I return to a discussion of film because of Earl’s own admission that film informs the conceptual framework that he applies to the inner city school.

In film after film, teachers are depicted as single. I am thinking here of Michelle Pfeifer in *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 2005) where the protagonist is a lone figure (Trier, 2001). Even if the character has a family, the family is often not shown. According to Trier (2001) “many school films primarily represent only the professional lives of teachers, with few personal life scenes in them. Examples include *To Sir, With Love, Up the Down Staircase, Dead Poets Society, and Dangerous Minds*” (p. 131). The issue that the teacher grapples with often
spills over into the teacher’s personal life to the point where the teacher’s own family, if there is one, is sacrificed.

However, Earl’s narrative can be read in another way. In *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Williams (1991) explored the ways in which family was linked to notions of respectability in the time of U.S. slavery. At that time, Blacks, as property, were neither “capable either of being part of the family respectability of White men or having family of their own” (p. 162). She explained that as chattel, Blacks “had no rights which the White man was bound to respect”; however, Blacks were also deemed unrespectable through their inability to create family on their own (p. 162).

Earl’s assertion that the inner city teacher lacks a family can read as a person who lacks respectability. This can also be read as an offshoot of the portrayal of teachers as lone figures in film. This construction might suggest that the inner city teacher is perhaps more transient and less likely to remain spatially fixed at the school. A teacher who does not have a family of her/his own could be read as an inability on the part of the teacher to nurture students. Earl wonders whether his conception of the inner city teacher as being without family is strange. Given his reliance of cinematic constructions of the inner city teacher, his conceptual lens is yet to be critically unpacked.

Earl goes on to explain that the inner city teacher is without family due to the location of the inner city school. Central to his thinking here is a sense in which a young family requires a stable environment in which to grow. According to Earl, the inner city itself would be unable to provide such stability. Notice also how his conceptions of the inner city teacher are tied to the stress of teaching in that environment:

Earl: For some reason I just don’t see them [the inner city teacher] middle age. I think they… I’m sure they… I think, whether it’s just the stress of teaching maybe ages them quickly. With the energy, they’re either one of those people who have been teaching for 20 years, but they still love teaching and they’re just getting out of bed
every morning ready to go, so they are bringing that energy to them, or they’re young and naive or just young and physically have that mental energy. And then there’s the end of the spectrum I’m talking about, someone who’s just there punching the clock and someone who is counting the years to retirement. So, I see…and I think maybe it’s also where the people are in their careers where they want to be, because having been on both sides of the desk now, as it were, but talking with colleagues teaching at the schools and things like that, I find that if they have small kids or if they’re starting…having their own families and maybe they’re looking for a more stable school environment or one that is maybe closer to where they’re living as well. And themselves being professionals, they aren’t living necessarily in what we would consider the inner-city area, geographically, or in terms of economic status.

Because Earl sees the inner city school as an unstable environment, he rationalizes that an inner city teacher would avoid subjecting her/his family to this space. Earl explains further that the professional status of teachers means that they can afford to live away from the inner city, whether this definition relates to an impoverished community or a geographic space.

Earl’s erasure of family from the inner city teacher and his removal of the inner city teacher from an inner city school if the teacher has a young family, can be read in spatial terms because the inner city itself is imagined to be an unrespectable space. It is this lack of respectability that he attaches to the inner city and the inner city school that deems it a place where a young family cannot thrive. Mitchell (2000) wrote that with respect to place, public spaces are constructed as masculine while suburban spaces are constructed as feminine. The suburban landscape “reflects and reinforces the atomized ‘nuclear’ family” (p. 127). On the other hand, the city is a place that is linked to conceptions of an immoral womanhood.

Historically, an ideology of proper womanhood was ill suited to life in the city and the idealized suburban Christian family, which provided the rationale for the separation of the home from the city, and created the suburb as the ideal family setting. Once the role of the family had been established around a suburban landscape, suburban life became the “only option for respectable middle-class life,” which is dependent upon “the sequestering of
women in the domestic sphere” (p. 129). Earl conceives of the average teacher as a young, White female. This is one reason why he conceives of the inner city as being a less stable environment for a teacher to raise a family.

Earl’s construction of the average teacher explains why this teacher must go to the inner city and is not of the inner city, as in school films. A racial reading of his narrative, where the average teacher is White, means that the inner city teacher, as White, must protect both herself and her family by living in a more stable space. Here the term “stable” can be seen as a coded term for White (Li, 2005) or suburban. The instability of the inner city, based on Earl’s narrative, makes this space un-liveable for a White teacher, if that teacher is responsible for her/his family. The only stable environment where the teacher’s family can thrive is a suburban one. The myth of the inner city teacher as young or old, and without family can be read as a spatial narrative that places young teachers at inner city schools because there is no other place for such teachers to begin their careers. This myth also displaces teachers with families out of inner city spaces. The rationale behind such a narrative is that such teachers need to protect their families from inner city neighbourhoods. This discourse reveals the extent to which the inner city teacher archetype is a complex narrative involving race and space.

Myth Five: Inner City Teacher as Dud: “They Can’t Teach Anywhere Else!”

The fifth myth is that of the inner city teacher as dud (they can’t teach anywhere else). This stereotype can be read in spatial terms because of its ties to the inner city school as a particular place where the teacher must go when barred from teaching at another school. This spatial relegation to the inner city school works to construct this schooling space as an academic wasteland. Madison explained that the inner city teachers have no choice but to
teach at an inner city school because “they are not allowed to go somewhere else.” These teachers are “badly screwed up somehow.” A complaint may have been filed against them at their school of choice and they end up being sent to the inner city school. Because teacher union policy makes it difficult to fire ineffective teachers who have surpassed their two-year probationary period, the ineffective teacher ends up at the inner city school:

Anita: The first one, is what do you see when you hear the term inner city teacher and then, what does this teacher look like?

Madison: Polar opposite of that [the teacher who must “save” inner city students] is you have the people that are there to teach the students that are there. And there are those people who made it through and are teaching because they needed, they found, ones who were truly inspired and they were going back to inspire the rest of them [the students] and you have people who maybe just have a better imagination or something. They’re there to teach the student. They’re not there to teach at an inner city school and these people would be fabulous teachers no matter what school they were at, because they are there for the student

Anita: Right, right

Madison: And then you have the third category of inner city. They’re there because they’re not allowed to go somewhere else. They’re either too new so that’s the only place they could get a job or they’re severely badly screwed up somehow. But years ago these have been the ones that someone put a complaint against them saying, “Remove to the other school.” They’re absolutely awful teachers. No one should ever have to have them as teachers and I we wonder why they went into teaching in the first place

Anita: Can I interrupt for a sec? Tell me how these teachers in category number three, how do they end up at the inner city school?

Madison: Sometimes they’re, well there’s two hopes for them. Right. The ones that got… the newbie’, [new teachers] right? They’ve just graduated. They can’t get a job anywhere else.

Anita: Right, right

Madison: They don’t want to be there. They don’t want to teach these, they don’t like the area of whatever. They think … they don’t want to be there. They’re there because they had no other choice. So either they’re too new or they’re, it’s almost like a punishment, you know. You’ve done your time but you were too racist at this school so we had to pick that one [the inner city school]. We had to take the first lateral transfer out and that was where it [the teaching position] opened up….it’s either there [at the inner city school] or they don’t have a job. And most of these
people didn’t want to be teachers in the first place. They want their summers off. I mean that’s the stereo type.

Madison’s description reveals much about the geographies of schooling that rely on common sense notions of the inner city school as a particular place. Of the three stereotypes of the inner city teacher that she describes, two relate to the inner city school as an academic wasteland, suggesting a space where nothing productive is expected to occur. Learning is not expected to happen. Teaching is not expected to take place. An academic wasteland is meant to conjure an image of academic decay. This is the hegemonic image of the inner city school that is most often portrayed in school films. These images send powerful cultural messages about who teaches at an inner city school and what that teaching looks like.

A spatial reading of Madison’s narrative reveals that the inner city school is a place where new teachers end up because they cannot find a job in some other place. The inner city schools is where they end up because they are “badly screwed up” and had to be transferred out of their schools. Madison explains that both of these teacher archetypes end up at the inner city school against their will, similar to the conception of inner city teachers in films. She explains, “they don’t want to be there.” The inner city school becomes a last resort space. It is a, “I have no choice but to teach here” space. As a last resort space, it is one to be considered after all other options have been exhausted. Based on Madison’s narrative, these teachers might leave this space for more “favourable” schools, at the earliest opportunity. Or, because they were transferred to the inner city school as a result of a complaint filed against them, they must remain in this space as a form of punishment until they retire.

The pedagogical impact of this discourse is the creation of the inner city school as a space that lacks effective teachers. The new teachers of inner city schools are seen as ineffective because they lack teaching experience and must learn how to become effective teachers over time. The teachers who are transferred to the inner city school due to some
egregious act are ineffective because this act compromised their ability to teach at a “regular”
school. Madison explains that their presence at the inner city school can be read as a form of
punishment. This discourse of punishment takes us once again to a construction of the inner
city school as a carceral space. A prison is a place where offenders are sent when they
commit crimes. Similarly, the inner city school is a place where teachers are transferred to
when no other academic spaces will accept them. The act of transferring an ineffective
teacher to the inner city school establishes this space as a dumping ground for teaching
transgressions. This dumping ground, again relating back to this idea of an academic
wasteland, is a place for teachers that no other school wants. Thus, the inner city school loses
its respectability as a place of learning. Further, because ineffective teachers are transferred to
the inner city school instead of losing their jobs, as they would in the private sector, the inner
city school functions as a dumping ground for that which cannot be disposed of. This
dumping ground or wasteland houses the waste of effective schools.

The discursive effect of such constructs ensures that effective teachers will have
difficulty seeing themselves teaching in an inner city context. Teachers who consider
themselves talented, intelligent, and driven could easily construct the inner city school as
space that is contrary to their teaching goals and to their own intellectual abilities. I cite the
participant in Groulx (2001) once again who explained that the private school would enable
her/him to “exercise all the skills [they’ve] learned.” This is an important consideration for
local school boards interested in recruiting effective teachers to inner city schools, a problem
that currently plagues local school boards in the United States (Weiner, 1993).
Conclusion

Madison articulates common sense understandings of the inner city teacher. Notice that Madison’s narrative discusses the description of the teaching archetype that I call “teacher as inspiration.” Madison explains that this teacher goes back to the inner city school to inspire students. She says, these are “fabulous” teachers and explains that they would be effective at any school, and not simply the inner city school. Yet, I argue that this archetype does not constitute a stereotype of the inner city teacher because such teachers are seen as being able to teach at any school. Their effectiveness does not confine them to the inner city school. Each of the inner city teacher myths presented in this chapter relies on a reading of the inner city school itself as a particular place that informs the identities of the teachers in this space. In short, without paying attention to the location of the inner city school, none of the inner city teacher archetypes would resonate with hegemonic understandings of inner city spaces.

Constructions of the inner city teacher as saviour of at-risk students, fish out of water, young, or old and without family, and dud (they can’t teach anywhere else) inform conceptions of inner city schools. For example, a teacher who must save inner city students must be hired into schools and communities that need to be saved from “violence and dysfunctional family structures” (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 396). An inner city teacher who is a fish out of water makes sense only when this narrative is mapped onto the inner city school as a foreign space that is far removed from the experiences of the typical White female teacher.

These discursive constructs play out at the level of policy. They inform the types of teachers who might be recruited to teach in schools that serve low-income and minority students. A teacher who is a dud (they can’t teach anywhere else) falls into place at the inner
city school. The ineffective teacher becomes naturalized to the inner city school precisely because of its construction as a non-academic space. At the level of policy, no questions need to be asked about placing an ineffective teacher at an ineffective school. This act becomes that which goes without saying (Lewis, in conversation) because the placement of this teacher at the inner city school is read as fitting, appropriate, and necessary for the efficient running of more deserving schools. At the level of policy, the placement of an ineffective teacher at the inner city school means that no questions need to be asked. The teacher’s dysfunction, as a mirror image of inner city school’s dysfunction, becomes a perfect match.

The inner city school itself imprints its identity onto inner city teacher identities. The inner city school’s identity, as a space that is less than, informs how such schools are viewed by new and existing teachers. The lack of respectability afforded to the inner city teacher goes beyond constructions of such teachers as waiting for retirement and as teachers who can’t teach anywhere else, even though these constructions portray the inner city teacher as a failure. This analysis can be taken one step further. The lack of respectability afforded to the inner city teacher must always be read in relation to inner city students who are often read as unruly and out of control. Further, these negative constructions of the inner city teacher must be viewed using the actual space of the inner city school, which is often read as dangerous. Chapter eight explores the raced and gendered identities of inner city teachers.
Chapter Eight

Reading Race, Gender and the Inner City Teacher

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss participant conceptualizations of issues of race and gender as they pertain to inner city teachers. I ask participants these questions: With respect to inner city teachers, what comes to mind about the teacher’s racial identity, and When you think about your own racial identity, what comes to mind when you think about teaching at an inner-city school? I posed the questions knowing that in Canada, the teaching profession is 95% White (Livingston & Antonelli, 2007). While I did not share this statistic with participants, I was interested in their analysis of the role that issues of race and gender might play in the role of teaching. Overall, participants, except for Madison, demonstrated limited ability to speak on issues of race. This corroborates research in Canada by Daniel (2009) who indicated that Canadian pre-service teachers often rely on knowledge of and experiences with gender, in order to bridge gaps in their knowledge of issues of race. She stated that, if pre-service teachers are to work for change, “it becomes extremely important for issues of racial inequality to be addressed in the teacher education program in order for educational change to be realized and for teachers to be effectively prepared to work within today’s diverse classrooms” (Daniel, 2009, p. 181)
A Raced Reading of the Inner City Teacher

Issues of social inequality also play a key role in understanding inner city schooling.

In a focus group session, participants shared that their TEP “marginally” discussed issues of race in one course that covered a multitude of topics. They stated that the course lacked an in-depth analysis of race. I include this section of the focus group transcript:

Anita: Now, just…just to jump in. What, um, how did your B.Ed. program deal with issues of race? How was it taken up?

Tristan: Marginally

Madison: Yeah

Tristan: I don’t think we did, but I think in one of the classes, X Course…I think we talked about it. We just went down the list, ADHD, Add, whatever, whatever…

Madison: Gifted…

Tristan: Blind…

Madison: Aboriginal…

Tristan: Uh, fetal alcohol…

Madison: Plug in [topic], plug in [topic]

Tristan: Yeah, race…

Madison: Plug in your issue here.

Tristan: Right? And it was just kinda…

Madison: homosexuality and… and variants on…

Tristan: Yeah, yeah, yeah, multi-gender, sub, sub, sub, sub, sub, sub. As if there was a checklist of things you had to talk about.

Madison: And so you had…you then would have a three-hour workshop and then a one-hour seminar that were vaguely related.

Overall, participants shared that this mandatory course explored issues of race in a manner that was too broad in scope to provide the conceptual grounding that they required.
With respect to their racial identities, the teachers had varying abilities to speak about their own racial identities. Andy discussed a sense in which all White males are stereotyped as being from wealthy backgrounds:

Andy: I mean, from having spoken to other people, I mean that, I realize that, for some reason it’s always thought that a, White males, or White, yeah White males in general, have a higher social class [inaudible]… stereotype is out there, but it’s not always true. So I mean, I guess, a stereotype would definitely be something that students might have in general. But, I guess my own experience would definitely be on top of that and my own upbringing would top that off, like saying, and would be more than the stereotype I feel.

Andy is suggesting here that his own working-class upbringing and his experiences resulting from his social class position, contest the tendency to equate White skin with privilege.

Again, Andy is relating to race in terms of experiences that have meaning for him. His conceptual understanding of race as only personal (Levine-Rasky, 2000; McIntyre, 1997) fails to situate his White skin within a broader framework of Whiteness (Giroux, 1997). His response also fails to make a connection between his Whiteness and teaching within an inner city context.

Audrey, who indicated that she had lived in poverty and was raised in a low-income household, shared a similar narrative; she explained that, in her past, racialized parents were often wary of her, assuming that her White skin meant that she was wealthy:

Audrey: Um, I think people… I worry that people make assumptions about who I am or the experiences I’ve had by the way I look. And I know that, you know, the color of my skin, hair, and eyes have given me somewhat of a social privilege, where, you know, but then, people assume that I’ve had, you know, access to money or access to resources; that somehow I haven’t had to struggle. Um, and I know that when I was in X city, I put up a barrier sometimes because some of the other moms, uh, thought that I was, like, wealthy or something.

Like Andy, Audrey clearly sees how her White skin, as a sign (Hall, 1997) is read as having race privilege. Because Audrey is speaking of race in personal terms, her analysis does not
discuss the fact that she enjoys White privilege on a structural level in Canadian society, despite the fact that she does not enjoy wealth (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Again, Audrey fails to take the question further by discussing how her racial location might impact her teaching.

Madison shared that her mixed-race First Nations/Aboriginal and Black identity meant that in her family there were explicit discussions about issues of race.

Anita: Okay. All right, excuse me. When you think about your own racial identity, what comes to mind when you think about teaching at an inner-city school?

Madison: One of the reasons why I, I did my background in, in X education is, was to connect with urban Aboriginals. Um, and my experience is being an urban Aboriginal Black of mixed descent. Um, and being of very mixed descent, um, and looking at connecting the dots in ways that I have been taught to connect the dots by drawing on different cultures. Um, there are things that we’re taught in my family about how to work within a…to be a minority in a majority society. Teachings that sort of come from my grandmother, who was passing for White in Chicago, um, and, I mean, worked in Toronto by passing for White and not having any pictures of her kids and not letting her kids come to her work because she was passing for White and her kids were obviously Black. Um, and what you do, well, you make sure that you have everything in line. You sort of…you get all the paper [qualifications] you have so they [Whites] can’t say no…they can’t say no, we don’t want you because you don’t have the paper.

It is clear from Madison’s narrative that issues of race have informed the experiences of her ancestors. Their teachings have equipped her with strategies designed to counter any discrimination that she might experience. I cite this narrative to reveal a sense in which Madison’s’ conceptual framework informed the experiences of marginalization and exclusion that were shared among her family members. This, I believe, was the crucial ingredient that enabled her to articulate issues of race in a manner that moved beyond the personal.

With respect to the racial identity of teachers, Earl discussed the predominance of White teachers in Canada’s teaching profession. He explained that the low numbers of racialized teachers in Canada was a given in “Canadian culture” and in “Ontario culture.” He suggested that inner city teachers in the United States might be more ethnically diverse, given that initiatives such as Affirmative Action work to promote the recruitment of more
racialized teachers. His analysis paid attention to systemic race-based issues in Canada’s teaching profession:

Anita: Now I just want to touch on something that you mentioned. You mentioned they probably are Caucasian [teachers], you said, but then you mentioned something about Canadian culture. I’m curious about that link that you’re making because you don’t necessarily make the same link with the United States.

Earl: I think there’s that difference and I think…in terms of the nature of the Canadian population, historically it has been Caucasians who have access…have means…I use the word ambition hesitantly, but ambition in terms of that, it’s [teaching] a viable…they… with the legacy of the country, I think it’s, historically in Canada, Caucasian students could see themselves going to a university. Whereas, if you were a member of an ethnic minority, up until recently, it wasn’t as…it wasn’t a given [attending university], it wasn’t an option as much. And so historically, those [Whites] have been people who have gone on to do that [to university] and then to go on [to obtaining an education degree] because becoming a teacher requires further education as well.

Later in the interview he shared:

Earl: And I think unless we see things that are different, that’s what we continue to do. So I guess that’s why I have the concept of the teachers being Caucasian because it’s the majority of the population and it’s specifically the population that’s going to have the access to levels of education. And so I think that’s sort of why I say that, whereas in the United States because the education may be…there’s more wide spread access to education and there are more policies like Affirmative Action and things like that, that have specifically targeted… to increase the visible diversity of the professions of university admissions and things like that.

Earl was one of the few participants, along with Madison, who provided a systemic analysis of race rather than conceptually framing race in individual terms. His recognition that policies such as Affirmative Action were meant to redress imbalances in the teaching workforce with respect to race is an indication that he is able to access the predominance of White teachers using a historic and political perspective. However, he fails to take his analysis further to discuss any relationship between the racial makeup of the profession and any impact that this might have on racialized students in schools.

When I asked participants to discuss the racial identity of inner city teachers, Bredz imagined these teachers to be of mixed-race identity (Mahtani, 2002). Madison explained that
the racial makeup of teachers in any one school was tied to the racial makeup of the
community where the school was located. Bredz discussed the fact that, in spite of this
conception, all the teachers at her field placement were White. As she struggled to work
through her conceptions of race and teachers, she explained that “the colour of your skin
only has so much to do with who you are,” suggesting that race was one of many social
locations that individuals occupy. Bredz emphasized that Whiteness, in and of itself, had little
meaning for whether a teacher could teach at an inner city school:

Anita: So when you think about an inner city school teachers, what racial…what’s the
racial identity that you think about when you hear the term, inner city school teacher?

Bredz: I think automatically, the average Joe who reads in a newspaper anything
about an inner city schools, you immediately think of a mixed person. Just because
you would feel that they would suit…

Anita: When you say “mixed,” what do you mean?

Bredz: Mixed, I could mean races, I could mean culture, ethnicity

Anita: I see, yes, yes

Bredz: I mean mixed, as in, I guess to me, no…it shouldn’t…it can’t be…it’s not
that they can’t be White. Of course, they can be White because I am White and I feel
that you know. That’s a tough question. Say it again for me. What do I think?

Anita: So the initial question was, “What do you see when you hear the term inner
city teacher?” Then I come back with, “What’s this teacher’s racial identity?” So
when you think about…when you close your eyes and think about a typical…typical,
you know. I have to use the word [typical] carefully, inner city teacher. What comes
to mind when you think about gender? And you talked about that. But what comes
to mind when you think about race and the teachers, in particular?

Bredz: And you mean race, as in Negro, Indian, Chinese, White?

Anita: Yes, racial identity, in terms of when you see the person, you are thinking in
terms of race, right

Bredz: Well all these teachers are White, right. But I think it’s underneath racial
identity though

Anita: Yes, it is
Overall, I sensed that Bredz did not see her racial identity as impacting her teaching. Reading her narrative made it clear that she struggled with questions surrounding her racial identity as though it was the first time that she was being asked to speak to her identity as White. I was unsure about the role that her upbringing in the Caribbean played. Bredz’ upbringing in a societal context where issues of race, and in particular, Whiteness, take on different meanings, may have made the questions about race in a Canadian context a more complex one. Her narrative clearly reveals her difficulty in verbalizing issues of race, a finding that appears in the research of Bonilla-Silva (2003). Bredz admits, “That’s a tough question,” and asks me to repeat it. She then explains that racial identity is something that is “underneath,” which I took to mean that it was something not always visible, as skin colour is. In retrospect, my wording of the question may have confused her.

However, it is also possible that Bredz was unwilling to enter in a discussion on race with me and her struggle may have reflected a privilege that she has enjoyed, until the interview, with respect to having to think about her race. However, her own admission that her Whiteness was constantly questioned while growing up indicated to me that she has experienced racial politics in her life. Yet, it seemed as though she had difficulty translating the politics of race in that particular socio-political setting to a Canadian one. In chapter three, Bredz made it clear that she did not understand racial politics in Canada.

Bredz: I just hate when people refer to other people as Black. I just, what, what do you mean Black? What, you know, it’s like when people call me a White girl, right, and we have that on X island, “Hey, Whitie.” And, and, so you wanna turn and say, “Hey Blackie,” you know? But at the same time, it’s like, so, I don’t know. In Canada, they all use that term Black a lot. Whereas to me, I don’t know, on X island, I was taught the proper thing to say, and this is even amongst my peers, I would say, “negro” I don’t know how you feel about that Anita.
During our interview and with each reading of her narrative, I see her inability to articulate race as having to do with being provided with little opportunity to discuss race in a formal setting and with a lack theoretical grounding in issues of race that could have been provided through coursework at her TEP.

While Andy explained that the inner city teacher “varies” with respect to race, Tristan suggested that race in an inner city context would be relevant only if the teacher “stands out.” He explained that in an all-White setting, my racial identity as a Black female would stand out. Conversely, in a predominantly racialized schooling context, his identity as a White male would stand out:

Anita: Now when you think about inner city teachers what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s racial identity?

Tristan: Well I think that part of it’s neither good nor bad… but it is and I gave the example… so if we were to teach at the same school, we could have different affects or the same affects but who we are… I am an X year old White Anglo-Saxon Protestant male. You know my family has been in Canada since the eighteenth century… that will have an immediate effect, whether it has a long-term effect I think depends on who we are as teachers. But if we went in to an all Black school, potentially on day one, I would stand out, right, but if we went in to an all White school, on day one, potentially you stand out.

Here, Tristan speaks of racial identity in terms of skin colour and schooling context where race is relational and dependent on the racial makeup of the school itself. His narrative fails to connect race to its relationship with other teachers, students, or parents. He answers the question; however, his answer does not provide an understanding of how issues of race might play out with respect to a teacher’s racial identity. This may have been Tristan’s way of resisting the question.

Picower (2009) writes that resistance among pre-service teachers with respect to issues of race is not passive, but “much more of an active protection of the incoming hegemonic stories” (p. 205). She explains that participants in her study were taught to remain
silent about issues of race and called this a common “performative tool” (p. 209).

Participants in her study rarely engaged in open discussion about race. Discussions about race and White privilege made them feel uncomfortable. Research by Levine-Rasky (2000) discussed “strategies of White talk” that participants sometimes use when discussing issues of race (p. 265). These strategies include (a) derailing the conversation, (b) evading questions, (c) dismissing counter-arguments, (d) withdrawing from the conversation, (e) remaining silent, (f) interrupting speakers and topics, and (e) creating a “culture of niceness” (p. 265).

These strategies were present in various degrees in this research. Except for Madison, participants tended to be cautious in their answers. Andy was the one participant who was most silent in his answers to questions pertaining to race.

In responding to the same question, Tara explained that inner city teachers are “normally White” based on her observation of teachers on her field placement:

Anita: Now when you think about inner city teachers what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s racial identity?

Tara: I think normally White. And you know, and again, like… looking at all the teachers at X School. I don’t think there is anybody of a different race. I think it’s almost all, like, White and mainly female.

However, Audrey suggested that with respect to race, inner city teachers are “a mix of everybody”:

Audrey: In X City, it was pretty much…we had a mix of everybody, yeah. Um, but that’s X City. That could just be reflective of… the capital. And also too, given our inner-city school was home to quite a few newly arrived people, there was a lot of teachers who could speak different languages. Yeah, like, we had one lady, she could speak um…like, Mandarin, Cantonese, and a host of different language. That could just be for that school. Here in X city, Ontario, I find it tends just to be Caucasian people. But then again, too, what…I don’t even like using that term [Caucasian] because my ancestry could be completely different from someone else, so yeah. But again, it could be anybody.

Audrey’s suggestion that teachers in a small Canadian town are predominantly White is noteworthy. Often in discussions about race, rural areas, and small cities are conceived of as
spaces that are race free. The narratives revealed that participants tended to conceive of race only when racialized bodies were present.

Madison was able to offer the most in-depth analysis of race. She explained that the racial makeup of the teachers often reflects the makeup of the immediate community, with respect to place. Yet, even Madison’s narrative reveals descriptions about race that I found troubling with her use of term such as “multicoloured” and “rainbow coloured.” For Madison, inner city teachers would hail from various racial backgrounds, including teachers of mixed-race ancestry:

Anita: So, when you think about an inner-city teacher, what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s racial identity?

Madison: If you went up to, say, Sault Ste. Marie [northern Ontario], you won’t get that same mixture of race, um, just because you don’t have that same mixture of race in the community. And I know in Belleville, although you do have…in their inner-city schools…you do have…I know several, ah, Native teachers that are working in the schools. Um, it’s not the same type of visual…the same visual diagram no…it’s that, that, layout…I can’t think of the word. It begins with ‘dio’ and ends in ‘la’. Yeah. You’re not gonna get that same sort of snapshot with the multicoloured background. And…whereas I know…I’ve been into…I’ve seen the staff pictures of some of the schools in Toronto, and they really are rainbow coloured.

Spatially, Madison is suggesting that place matters with respect to race. In some communities that are less racially diverse, the racial makeup of the teachers at schools might be reflective of this lacking. In a city like Toronto, which has been called “a city of neighbourhoods,” the racial and ethnic composition of communities works to inform the racial and ethnic composition of schools.

These new teachers did not conceive the racial imbalance between the teaching profession and the student population in Ontario of as problematic. Individual narratives reveal that participants did not have the language to discuss issues of race in a profound way that linked the racial identity of teachers with student outcomes. Further, analyses of race remained at an individual level that lacked attention to the intersectionality of race with other
identity positions. Participant narratives also generally lacked acknowledgement of systemic racial factors, such as the lack of racialized teachers in Ontario schools or the lack of a culturally inclusive curriculum (Levine-Rasky, 2000; McIntyre, 1997; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001).

Several researchers argue that the racial divide between teachers and students can create differential learning outcomes for students (Carr, 2008; Milner, 2006; Sleeter, 2001; Solomon et al. 2005; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001). Research shows that both pre-service (McIntyre, 1997) and in-service (Levine-Rasky, 2000) teachers are often resistant to antiracist discourse that explores issues of race and the impact that race might have on the educational outcomes of students. Because participants were placed in field placements in predominantly White schools, with no racial differences between teachers and students, no one participant conceived of a teacher’s racial identity as having any impact on the teaching of students. Participant viewing of a predominantly White teacher workforce working with predominantly White students was not perceived to be an issue; race as an issue was rendered invisible in such school settings. My asking participants to speak about race, when they taught in predominantly White settings, may have been conceived of as odd, because the absence of racialized peoples signalled to many that race was not an issue at all.

With respect to place, the all-White inner city field placement functioned in at least two ways. It erased issues of race from the inner city schooling landscape, since race is seen only when racialized bodies are present (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Secondly, it erased issues of race as a schooling issue that impacts the learning of students, since issues of race were made invisible in this all-White space. The field placement plays a key role in the ability of pre-service teachers to see and to think through issues of race in schools, and their roles as
teachers within it. Participants see race to the extent that race is located in racialized bodies. An absence of racialized bodies on a field placement setting will render issues of race as occurring in some other place. This speaks to the extent to which race continues to be viewed as an issue that involves racialized Others and not Whites. The location of field placement plays a major role in helping pre-service teachers to conceptualize issues of race, even if these conceptualizations must be further interrogated during teacher education courses. It is therefore likely that pre-service teachers who learn to teach in predominantly White settings will hold different views about issues of race and schools, compared with pre-service teachers who are placed in racially diverse schools.

While I am unable to make broad conclusions about race and Whiteness based on this data, individual narratives reveal that participant conceptions of their racial identities were tied to their familial experiences, their exposure to and confrontations with their racial identities, and with their ability to assume a White racial identity. Madison’s in-depth knowledge about issues of race revealed a sense in which race was an issue that she did not have the privilege to ignore.

Finally, it is also possible that my racial identity as a Black woman played a role in participant reluctance to speak to issues of race. Race of interviewer effects (ROIE) may have influenced participant willingness to engage in conversations about race with a Black researcher. No participant openly stated that my racial identity created tension for him or her surrounding race as a topic. However, the researcher literature speaks to the strategies racialized researchers often employ when working with White pre-service teachers. One such strategy is the use of White research facilitators when conducting research on issues of race (Paul, 2001). It is likely that the same participants would have responded differently to the
same questions about race if they were posed by a White researcher. I suspect that in their effort not to offend me, participants may have censored their responses about race.

A Gendered Reading of the Inner City Teacher

In this section, I make issues of gender problematic as they concern the inner city teacher. I begin with the premise that teaching is a gendered enterprise and that issues of gender have always informed teaching (Apple, 1986; Weiner, 2007). The data revealed that participants were keenly aware of the various ways in which issues of gender informed schooling more generally, and the act of teaching particularly. As corroborated in Daniel (2009) participants were much more willing to engage in discussions about gender, than they were in discussions about race. Schick (2000) argued that entry into the teaching profession afforded women “middle-class respectability” (p. 299). She explained that “for White working-class women, becoming teachers provides access to public respectability in ways that both confirm their racial dominance and simultaneously reproduce socially conserving roles expected of White middle-class women in Canadian society” (p. 299). Schick suggested that her own entrance into teaching was steeped in “highly regulated social relations of class, race, and heteronormativity” (p. 301).

In this section, I explore gendered constructions of the inner city teacher through participant conceptions of the ways in which issues of gender inform teaching and the role of teachers in inner city schools. Most participants discussed issues of gender in relation to the predominance of female teachers at the elementary level of education. Several mentioned what is commonly referred to as “the boy problem” in education. The boy problem suggests that the “feminization of teaching” is adversely affecting the academic achievement of boys, as opposed to girls, and that efforts must be made to “re-masculinize” elementary education.
Several participants discussed the lack of male teachers in the teaching profession and their awareness of discourse surrounding a need for male teachers as “role models” in inner city schools. Again, I use the term “inner city schools” in this chapter because it speaks to the ways in which the term has meaning with respect to a teacher’s gender.

Bredz suggested that an inner city teacher’s gendered identity could be male or female. She shared her observations that women teachers on her field placement weren’t as “laid back” as the male teachers. For this reason, she preferred to work with male teachers.

In the narrative below, she described female teacher interactions at the school:

Anita: Yes, good, good. And what’s the teacher’s gender?

Bredz: I don’t know. There were very few males. But to me, they were a lot more laid back. They didn’t hold grudges. The females, I have to say, excuse my French…bitchy against one another, whether it be within the staff as well as… you know…if any one parent is coming [to see the teacher], generally it is the mother, right. The females against females, my god, you have a battle.

Bredz interprets the relationship between mothers and teachers as a gendered construct. Her observation that women teachers at her field placement were “bitchy” towards each other suggests that for her, this bitchy-ness is a function of women working with women, reflecting a misogynistic view of female-female relationships. Throughout her interview, she referred to the fact that the teachers at this particular school seemed to lack cohesion and as a staff and were generally unsupported by the school’s administration. Bredz may have been witnessing unhealthy working relationships among teachers due to a lack of morale. However, she speaks to the relationships among women as unhealthy and uses this to justify her preference for working with male teachers.

Bredz’ narrative points to the ways in which patriarchy functions to penalize women who don’t get along. Bredz’ focus on the personal attitudes of the teachers overshadows any
systemic factors that inform the lack of cohesion among the teachers. It is ironic that Bredz uses the term “bitch,” which is a derogatory term that functions to put women in their place. Its use hides the fact that in a female-dominated school, any conflict among teachers can be read as a conflict among women, when in fact the conflict could simply relate to matters of the school. In using a bitch discourse, she is suggesting women who work with other women have a tendency to devalue each other, simply because they are female. Women who defy hegemonic female performance (Butler, 1990) in schools are punished, beginning at the level of discourse.

For Earl, teaching was a female-dominated profession. He explained that “when one thinks of a teacher one thinks of a female.” However, Earl, as well as other participants, such as Tara, draws a distinction between the female-dominated elementary grades and male-dominated secondary level of education. Earl’s view of the inner city school as a dangerous space automatically suggests that such schools are spaces where males might be more inclined to teach. In the narrative below, notice how he associates the teacher’s gender with the neighbourhood of the school:

Anita: All right…so we talked a little bit about what the teacher looks like and you actually answered a question that’s coming later, so…but what is the teacher’s gender?

Earl: The reason I say female because, it’s, again, like I was saying, it’s historically a female oriented and dominated profession and when one thinks of a teacher one thinks of female. Also, everything I’m talking about, more or less, is the example of a high school, except for the few examples where I talked about the grade two school I worked at. These are all high school examples, so in high schools you will have more male teachers. And then the reason I say male, again, goes to this horrible, ‘Why would you want to work there… it’s a rough neighbourhood?’ or something like that. So maybe it’s the gender construct stereotype of a male teacher would be able to handle these kids.

Earl’s narrative is illustrative of the extent to which issues of gender are mapped onto spaces. His construction of the inner city school as a dangerous space works to take women
out of this space. Given that males are more able to protect themselves from physical harm in threatening spaces, the White female teacher at an inner city high school is seen to be in a vulnerable position. This vulnerability has to do with her inability to protect herself from harm in a large city (Bondi & Peake, 1988), if we are speaking strictly about geography.

This notion that male teachers are able to “handle” inner city kids represents an interwoven (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994) discourse that appeared in the narratives of several participants. By interwoven, I mean a discourse that speaks to several different issues simultaneously. The interwoven discourse of male teachers as needed for inner city schools is at the same time a discourse about

- discipline: inner city students as “out of control,”
- space: inner city spaces are “dangerous” and males can protect themselves from harm,
- role models: inner city students need strong male figures whom they can “look up” to, given their home lives, and
- gender and teaching: the over representation of women in teaching must be balanced by an increased male presence.

These hegemonic notions can all be found within the discourse of a need for male teachers.

Earl’s narrative reveals that a female teacher would be less able to handle inner city students. These students must be handled because they are out of control. This out of control stereotype calls for a male presence to restore order and control. Order and control must be restored because such students are most likely diverse. However, this order and control relies on hegemonic masculinity (Barrett, 2001; Connell, 2001) for legitimacy. Such masculinity has to conform to male performance as strict, in charge, and capable of violence, if the situation calls for it. The female teacher is read as being unable to perform in this way.
She is seen as being unable to put these particular students *in their place* if she is to survive in that environment.

I argue that young White, female, pre-service teachers, in particular, are written out of inner city schools as a function of the discursive racialization of both the inner city and the inner city school. The construction of the inner city school as unruly space works to determine those bodies that belong and those that are rendered *out of place*. Various institutions, including the family, popular media, and schools themselves, support this process. Research shows that friends and family members often play a key role in discouraging pre-service teachers from entering inner city environments. Marxen and Rudney (1999) explained that in preparation for an inner city field placement in the Chicago area, they often reassured White pre-service teachers and their parents about teacher safety. Mitchell (2000) warned that popular *Take Back the Night* campaigns about the safety of women in cities aim to draw attention to the extent to which cities actually pose real threats to women in terms of physical assaults, such as rape. Mitchell (2000) stated that the male/female dichotomy of the city is one that translates into a conception of women in cities as interruption, a symptom of disorder, and a problem (p. 210).

Smaller (2007) indicated that public schooling can also work to discourage women from entering inner city schooling spaces. Writing of an inner city teacher education program in Toronto’s Regent Park area, the researcher discusses that a new pre-service teacher to the program recounted that she was warned, “I know of people that have been stabbed and killed in Regent Park” (p. 104). This warning served to discourage any desire on her part to work in this neighbourhood.

Teacher education programs that marginalize discourse on inner city schooling issues through the de-legitimization of critical discourse also write White female pre-service
teachers out of inner city schools. This occurs when such programs fail to present teaching at an inner city school as viable teaching options for pre-service teachers upon graduation. In essence, this marginalization functions in two ways. First, it falsely lulls pre-service teachers into believing that they need not worry about inner city schooling issues, either because they do not exist or worse, because they will never end up teaching at such a school. Secondly, it enables pre-service teachers to graduate from TEPs knowing very little about teaching in this milieu, only to possibly accept a teaching position in the absence of work in more desirable schools.

Young, White, female pre-service teachers are also written out of inner city spaces due to racialized fear of the inner city school as a marked space. Research by Kern (2005) about the negotiation of city spaces by White women in Toronto found that White and middle-class privilege enabled White women to feel safe in most urban spaces. However, the women reported feeling vulnerable in “unfamiliar and disreputable” spaces (p. 373). In spaces that were labelled as “bad areas” their Whiteness “became markers of difference that contributed to a feeling of potentially being ‘targeted’” (p. 373). Kern suggested that women’s experiences with violence also contribute to feelings of safety in urban areas.

The White female teacher embodies the myth of the idealized White female. In this mythical idealization, which dates back to the Victorian era (Dyer, 1997), the White female body is imagined to be morally pure and virginal. Therefore, young, White women cannot be imagined to be working in the “dangerous hood” as teachers. This myth of the virtuous and moral White female not only works to keep her out of such dangerous spaces, but also functions to shield her from a perceived “dark sexual threat” that supposedly lurks there. hooks (1981) argued that the myth of the Black male rapist was used by White men in power during the reconstruction era immediately after slavery. This myth served to restrict White
female contact with Black men. Central to this myth was the separation of White women and Black men. The White female body, then, becomes vulnerable to the presence of Black men.

Research in Canada by Solomon and Palmer (2004) discussed teacher fear of Black students in particular. They wrote that some student behaviour in schools is labelled Black behaviours. Such behaviour is often spatial in nature and includes the presence of Black students in hallways, staircases, cafeterias, and parking lots. The presence of Black male students in these spaces is labelled as hyper-aggressive and gang-like. The researchers cited a White, female teacher in a Canadian study who discusses her fear of encountering Black youth in schooling spaces. The teacher explains that she is afraid to walk near building exits at the rear of the school or running into a group of six or more Black male youth.

The teacher’s racial fear, as well her feelings of vulnerability, inform her assessment of her safety in the presence of young Black men in schools. According to Kern (2005), racist fear of violence is often expressed through spatial processes such as suburbanization and gentrification where dominant groups are able to “maintain racial segregation, White privilege, and class privilege” (p. 373). For teachers, racial and social class distance from racialized students in schools is maintained by their choice to accept teaching position in schools that do not primarily serve low-income and minority students.

A gendered reading of the discursive practices (Foucault, 1972) surrounding inner city schooling functions to police particular bodies. Based on popular discourse, the inner city school becomes a place where a male teacher might teach, since males can safely move into and out of inner city spaces. The inner city school might be a place where racialized women might teach, since inner city spaces are read as places where raced bodies naturally belong. However, the White female body is imagined not to belong to the inner city school due to raced, gendered, and spatial constructions of this space.
These constructs of who and what are required in inner city schooling spaces discursively work to write women out of inner city schools. Given that teaching has always been a female-dominated profession (Martino & Kehler, 2006; Prentice & Theobald, 1991; Strober & Tyack, 1980), such constructions impact the ability of inner city schools to attract the most effective teachers. Milner (2006) wrote that in the United States, both inner city and rural schools tend to attract “the least qualified or credentialed teachers” (p. 346). In Ontario, teacher education policy requires all elementary and secondary teachers to obtain a teaching degree before entering the profession (OCT, 2011). Therefore, it is difficult to know the extent to which the least qualified teachers are hired into Canadian inner city schools.

Instead, I am interested in a discussion about attracting teachers who are not only effective, but are willing to work with students by critically engaging such students in strategies for their success. I am interested in a discussion about attracting teachers who regard working with low-income and minority students as opportunities of hope. How might inner city and urban schools attract effective teachers who resist the stereotyping and oversimplification of schools that have been demonized within the wider culture, such that teacher entrance into such spaces is not perceived as negatively informing teaching identities? Teacher educators must come to terms with such questions.

Male teachers needed as “role models” for inner city students.

Tristan expressed concern about “the boy problem” in schools (Froese-Germain, 2006; Martino & Kehler, 2006). Proponents of the boy problem suggest the predominance of female teachers at the elementary level of schooling is linked to the underachievement of boys (Martino & Kehler, 2006). According to Martino and Kehler (2006) this discourse of the boy problem calls for the recruitment of male teachers in order to rebalance the current
gender imbalance that adversely affects the learning outcomes of boys relative to girls. The researchers argued that this discourse often relies on common sense understandings that are informed by a neo-liberal and neo-conservative politics that seeks to “re-traditionalize hegemonic masculinities” (p. 114).

At several points in my interview, Tristan spoke of his concern about the performance of boys in schools, especially boys that he considered at risk. Tristan emphasized that women dominated the TEP where he obtained his teaching degree and comprised the majority of volunteers at an outreach program for marginalized youth where he volunteered. He compared the over representation of women in teaching and in the volunteer program, which he regarded as positive, to the over representation of boys in the outreach program, which he regarded as negative. Tristan also discussed the pressure that he felt as a male teacher in a female-dominated profession:

Anita: So, this one says and these questions are about race and gender. When you think about an inner city teacher what comes to mind with respect to the teachers’ gender?

Tristan: So for me as a male teacher I actually feel some pressure because I go into places where I am… first of all, I am older than many of the teachers, especially new ones… and sometimes I am working in the department, as I did with X school, where there is only one other male teacher out of fifteen or twenty… I did some readings in the Toronto School Board where some men were refusing to work at certain schools ‘cause there is only one other man… they said, ‘We…we can’t’.

Tristan discusses the under-representation of males in elementary teaching as a problem that is being resisted by male teachers. Martino and Kehler (2006) explained that the feminization of teaching is often shrouded in media discourse of male victimization, where boys and male teachers fall victim to women teachers. I did not tell Tristan that the situation was more complex than what he perceived. I did not share with him Froese-Germain’s (2006) argument that the boy problem debate about male student failure in schools often fails to
discuss the achievement of racialized males and males from low-income families whose achievement is more adversely affected than White, middle-class boys.

With respect to gender, Tara explained that, on her field placements, there were few males teachers; however, the presence of one male pre-service teacher caused a stir among her colleagues:

Anita: Now, these questions are going to relate to issues of race and gender. Okay, so when you think about an inner city teacher, and you mentioned this earlier, uh, what comes to mind with respect to a teacher’s gender?

Tara: I think well, at least in our school, like X School. There were seven of us [pre-service teachers], and we had one guy. And the fact that we had one guy was, like, ‘Oh, my God, there’s one guy’... which is surprising because again...well, not really ‘cause most of the teachers at X School are females...although the grade three teacher and the grade four teacher are both males. And then the Tech teacher, maybe...but again, I feel like... well, the Tech teacher again... that’s normally, like, a male, a sexual stereotype... type thing. Yeah. Yeah, but yeah, I think most of the teachers are, and that’s I think, you know, years and years of ...you know, women are...and most of the guys go into high school...I feel like there’s not...there were more guys who were in, like, a high school realm that there were in the elementary school realm.

Tara describes her conception of a gendered division with respect to teachers; however, she also describes a sense in which a gendered division continues to exist with respect to teaching subjects such as Design and Technology.

Audrey shared that male teachers were in high demand because there were so few of them. She suggested further that male teachers were needed because “they’re more disciplined” than female teachers. However, her counter narrative surrounding the discourse of male role models in inner city schools is most telling:

Anita: Now, the following questions will look at the issues of race and gender. When you think about an inner-city teacher, what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s gender?

Audrey: But, the interesting thing I heard at the one school I was at, was to give a male role model for our children [low income], which, okay, my problem with that is, then you’re assuming that dad is not involved, and why are we assuming that dad is not involved in an inner-city school child’s life? Yeah, so we’re assuming that dad is
either, not in the picture, or dad is a negative influence. Or, you know, then what are we assuming about mom? You know, like, what about our children who come [to Canada], and one parent has to stay behind [in another country] because of, you know, immigration. Dad could be very supportive, dad’s just…or maybe dad died, or maybe dad’s perfectly fine.

Audrey’s counter narrative exposes the sense in which the discourse of male role models for inner city students speaks to deficit constructions of inner city parents. While all students are in need of positive male and female role models, Audrey clearly sees this discourse for what it does. It casts inner city students, even more than other students, as being in particular need of a male presence in schools. The common sense assumption working here is one that suggests that inner city students do not already have positive role models. Madison expanded on Audrey’s assertions and speaks specifically to this stereotype:

Anita: Okay. All right, so, the following questions will look at issues of race and gender. When you think about an inner-city teacher, what comes to mind to respect to the teacher’s gender?

Madison: In general, in teaching, you do have far more women teachers than you have males. But I find that when I…what… it seems to be my impression is… is that some of the males are going into teaching…are, um, that are then choosing to teach in the inner city are the ones that were inspired as young men in the inner-city schools, and therefore, you will get a few more males than you would get from the suburban schools where they’re, they’re not seeing a need for young male models… I’m sorry, for adult male models for the young men. I find in a suburban school or a school that doesn’t have the same issues, they’re not concerned about the men having good models. They’ve got good models at home or in the business community. But you really do have a lot of talk in inner-city schools of providing male role models. So, I think maybe you would tend to see, um, a large number of men teach… male teachers. That said, I have nothing whatsoever to back that up.

Madison’s counter narrative articulates a sense in which the discourse of male role models is absent when speaking of suburban students. These students, she explains, are seen as already having positive role models at home and in the business community. Discursively, the positive male role model ideology works only in communities where these positive figures are missing.
Conclusion

Racial and gendered readings of the inner city teachers are incomplete without attention to geography. Future research in this area might explore the notion of safety and fear itself, with respect to male and female teachers in schools, and in particular, inner city schools. Such research might consider the extent to which current inner city schoolteachers report being afraid of teaching in this setting, and the reasons behind their fear. Furthermore, research could explore the experiences of racialized and immigrant women teachers in inner city schools to interrogate the notion of safety itself from the social location of different groups of women. For example, do Black, Muslim, or openly gay/lesbian women teachers experience fear in inner city schools? If they do, in what ways does this fear manifest itself? If it does not, what accounts for the fact that women are seen as needing to be protected from inner city schools?

Still another area of research could examine hegemonic forms of masculinity in inner city schools. What might this brand of masculinity look like, how does it manifest itself, and how might it differ when performed in suburban schooling contexts? In chapter nine, I present participant narratives about classroom management in inner city schools. Classroom management concerns emerged as an interwoven discourse that simultaneously revealed teacher concerns about teaching inner city students and teaching in disreputable spaces (Kern, 2005), along with deep-seated concerns about teacher success.
Chapter Nine

If I Can’t Manage, I Can’t Teach
Classroom Management for Inner City Schools

Introduction

If there was one common thread that ran throughout the narratives of most participants as they discussed their potential teaching in a Canadian inner city context that thread, was classroom management. The data revealed that participants largely conceived of effective classroom management strategies to be a necessary function of teaching in an inner city school. Participant conceptions of the intervention strategies required of teachers in such spaces mirrored their conceptions of inner city schools, students, parents, and teachers. Participants who applied a hegemonic conceptual framework to inner city schooling tended to apply that same framework to classroom management. Similarly, participants who tended to apply counter-hegemonic understandings often critiqued common sense approaches to teachers and students in inner city classrooms.

Hegemonic narratives revealed that inner city teachers needed to have “strong” classroom management in order to teach in inner city schools. The construction of the inner city student as being “out of control” informed this belief. By strong classroom management, participants most often suggested that these strategies needed to be consistent, clear, and established at the beginning of the school year. Counter-narratives indicated that inner city student behaviour relied less on these students being out of control and more on teacher attitudes and teacher interactions with students. Furthermore, ineffective classroom
management witnessed during the field placement often worked to reinforce conceptions of inner city students as unruly (Reay, 2007) and inner city teachers as ineffective. A deficit framing of low-income and minority students as inherently lacking in motivation to learn, having difficulty “settling down” and, posing a challenge for teachers were themes that ran through some of the hegemonic narratives that emerged from the data.

Milner and Tenore (2010) wrote that classroom management concerns are “exacerbated in urban settings, where students’ languages, experiences, ethnicities, religions, and abilities may be highly diverse and may or may not be shared by the teacher” (p. 561). Using Britzman’s (1991) myth of everything depends on teacher, the act of teaching becomes “confined to controlling classroom life and exerting institutional authority as if it were pedagogical” (p. 225). In many respects, I argue that this preoccupation with control takes focus away from a focus on pedagogy and instruction and displaces it onto the behavioural management of students. She wrote that pre-service teachers tend to construct teachers are either tyrants or comrades. On the one hand, tyrants exert the utmost control; on the other, comrades exert no control at all. Britzman (1991) emphasized that each of these dualistic readings of the role of teachers is problematic:

The tyrant imposes an autocratic rule, while the comrade discards all explicit rules. By rendering the teacher’s identity dichotomous and by defining either of this spectrum as unitary and noncontradictory, they could not consider the multiplicity of identities that they in fact embodied and that the contexts elicited. (Britzman, 1991, p. 225)

The myth that inner city and urban classrooms require stricter discipline is informed by a deficit reading of inner city students as unruly (Ullucci, 2009). According to Ullucci (2009) such readings are premised on negative constructions of inner city students that call for harsher measures:

The mythology concerning discipline in urban schools is deeply rooted; the typical portrait involves unruly children and disrespectful behavior. Classroom management in urban schools automatically suggests negative connotations - “if it is urban, then
it’s bad”... Teachers believe they must create highly structured, punitive measures in which to control their charges. (Ullucci, 2009, p. 24)

Foucault (1995) theorized that the chief function of discipline is to train. He suggested that discipline makes individuals and functions as a “technique of power” that sees individuals as both “objects and instruments of its exercise” (p. 170). Discipline can be understood as a technique that relies upon observation, such that the disciplined must always be seen. The gaze becomes an instrument of power because it is through the gaze that power can be exercised. Historically, working-class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, prisons, and schools were spatially arranged so that “hierarchical surveillance” could be exercised, ensuring that inhabitants could be easily seen from multiple angles of such a building (p. 171).

Foucault indicated that the school had multiple functions that included health, politics, qualifications, and morality:

The school building was to be a mechanism of training….Train vigorous bodies, the imperative of health; obtain competent officers, the imperative of qualification; create obedient soldiers, the imperative of politics; prevent debauchery and homosexuality, the imperative of morality. (Foucault, 1995, p. 172)

The spatial arrangement of institutions of discipline, such as the school, made it an “apparatus of observation” (p. 173).

The panopticon, which locates power at the centre such that inhabitants of a prison are always under the gaze of power, is the ultimate mechanism of power. In many ways, schools are arranged such that students can be seen and such that their behaviour can be monitored at all times. Students can be viewed as they walk down hallways, can be seen on television monitors and on cameras, and can be watched in the classroom itself. This constant surveying of students informs their management in spaces where they are confined for specific amounts of time each day. The very term “classroom management” suggests that
students in schools must be closely monitored as a cohesive group, with little room for individual student deviation.

Milner and Tenore (2010) explained that the research literature on classroom management has paid little attention to issues of culture. The literature on classroom management is broad, with a lack of consensus on “the constructs used to conceptualize classroom management” (p. 562). Specifically, the literature is diversity into (a) referral patterns, (b) connections between students and teachers, and (c) systemic barriers to classroom management. Research on classroom management and the referral of students to school administrators or to law enforcement officials reveals that “most disciplinary referrals originate in the classroom and more times than not, the referrals are for students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 562). This suggests that issues of race and social class are key factors in the manner in which disciplinary techniques are applied in schools.

The researchers explained that tensions exist between what Delpit (1988) called the dominant culture of schools and the knowledge and experiences that students bring with them to classrooms. These tensions create misunderstandings in classrooms between students and teachers, with teachers often reacting to student transgressions in order to “save face” and with students sometimes reacting to teacher control out of peer pressure:

If an African American student “talks back” or “mouths off” to a teacher, the teacher may interpret this behavior as completely disrespectful and intolerable. The student may be behaving in this way due to peer pressure—not wanting friends to see him or her as weak. Disrespect or malice may not be the impetus for the student’s actions. Rather, the student may be trying to “survive” and not engender ridicule from his or her classmates. (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 563)

Notice how the term “survive” occurs in this instance even when academic researchers attempt to make sense of the behaviour of African American students. I cite this here to discuss the racial and social class aspects of classroom management referrals. However, I also
include this passage to suggest that the research literature is not immune to anthropomorphism by employing terms such as “survive” to discuss the circumstances surrounding low-income and minority students.

McCready and Soloway’s (2010) study on classroom management in Toronto’s Model Schools reported that the “discipline gap,” which illustrates that Black male students are disproportionately punished in schools compared to students from other racial groups, was also occurring in Toronto’s Model Schools:

In most North American urban schools, large gaps in suspensions and expulsions—called “discipline gaps”—exist between Black male students and their non-White peers…. This is also the case in Model Schools. The teachers in Model Schools, many of whom identify as advocates for equity and social justice for all students, tended to be disturbed and ultimately embarrassed by this racially defined gap in discipline because it went against their values. The teachers approached CUS [the Centre for Urban Schooling] hoping the PI [Principal Investigator] could provide some technical expertise on what to say and what to do with the unruly Black boys in their schools. (McCready & Soloway, 2010, p. 113)

Of all students, teachers identified “unruly Black boys” as problematic. What is even more telling is the researcher’s failure to critique the teachers’ request for assistance with “unruly Black boys”. This request is never fully examined for what it is; one that is informed by race, social class, and gender. That the teachers identified unruly Black boys as a problem, and not other students, is significant and worthy of critique.

“Academic Schools” Require Less Management

Both Tara and Earl used a discourse of “presence” to describe the attributes that teachers needed to possess in order to teach effectively in an inner city setting. For both participants this idea of presence is a specific personal quality that inner city teachers must have. Their use of the term “presence” functions as a coded term for control or for effective classroom management strategies. In the narrative below, Earl explains that he would apply a
more informal approach to his teaching of inner city students. He emphasizes that an inner
city school that he considers to be “academic” would require less management than non
academic ones. I presented the first part of this narrative in an earlier chapter. This excerpt is
a continuation of Earl’s assertion that inner city students tend to have difficulties settling
down:

Anita: So, how do they [inner city students] behave? Cause you talk about energy

Earl: So, the teaching style [with inner city students] is more relaxed and more
informal as well. I think there’s that and that’s something that, and I know personally
as an educator, obviously I want to get along with my students, but I also definitely
try to keep a separation in terms of, you know, I’m… of student versus teacher and
there’s not, you know, calling me ‘Mr. So and So’ and things like that. Whereas in an
inner-city school, it may be less formal relationships and maybe that’s the strategy in
terms of, ‘Okay, so we’re gonna get through this and work on that and get you
thinking about this’. So we’re not going to worry about, you’re not going to worry so
much about imposing these grand, overarching… you’re gonna have sort of class
rules, but it’s going to be a lot more relaxed… And the one [the inner city school] I
was teaching at had this reputation of being a ‘more academic’ school. And so
students in those… what my students faced was absolutely no barriers to their
education. And even, because of the reputation [of the school], even the students
maybe they were living… the odds, some students who were living in poverty or
came from difficult circumstances and home life, their parents were still very
committed to and involved in the students. And so teaching in that area… the
students were very… classroom management wasn’t much of an issue because the
vast majority of students would just sit there quietly or you’d only have to ask them
once or twice and they would… a lot of times there would be an issue, but for the
vast majority of students who… they were buying into it.

Earl explains that a more relaxed style is needed in inner city classrooms. He uses the term
“relaxed” to suggest that inner city classroom require less formality. He describes this
formality as requiring students to call him “Mr. So and So.” Earl explains that he has to
relinquish that level of control in an inner city classroom, more so than when teaching
students in other contexts.

I read Earl’s narrative to mean that he is aware that in an inner city context, his
authority might be challenged and his inability to relinquish control could result in conflict.
However, Earl does not specifically state why this environment requires less formality. He
does indicate that he is struggling to come to terms with a classroom management style that feels comfortable for him, which confirms work by Britzman (1991). Earl may pride himself on establishing a relationship with students where his power is understated, as opposed to one where his power is overt. I read his narrative to mean that inner city students, as hard to settle down, require a less formal approach from teachers in order to get them to work. This leads me to wonder whether students in this setting would be held to a different standard. His need to use a less formal approach with inner city students can also be read to conceptions of such students as problematic.

Earl’s narrative reveals a sense in which the academic reputation of an inner city school determines the level of control needed in classrooms. Using the rationale of his argument, academically inclined students are less likely to pose classroom management issues. Clearly for Earl, the academic culture of a school precipitates students who are “buying into” education. Earl may not recognize that middle-class students have a vested interest in buying into education because they, and their parents, are aware of the payoffs that await them. However, low-income students may already understand that there is little reward for their buying into education (Lewis, in conversation). Earl’s use of the phrase “buying into it” also works to suggest that at some level, teachers are asking students to passively accept the manner in which they are controlled in schools. Earl admits that while academic inner city students may indeed hail from impoverished homes, the culture of the school prompts parents into being “very committed.” Therefore, fewer classroom management interventions are required.

My concern about Earl’s assumption that inner city students might require a more relaxed approach in classrooms involves teacher expectations of inner city students. By automatically assuming that inner city students require a more relaxed teaching style, Earl is
essentializing such students. Their inner city status means that his pedagogy automatically shifts to one of informality. Instead of suggesting that he, along with his students, impact the culture that is created in his classroom, Earl discusses applying a laid back approach to inner city students because of a sense that such students do not require the formalities of schooling.

Without paying attention to the existing culture of the school or the culture of schools with which their parents may be familiar, Earl essentializes inner city students by suggesting that they (unless they are in an academic school) automatically require a more laid back approach to their learning. I am not suggesting that inner city students cannot and do not respond to teachers with a relaxed or informal management style. What concerns me is that this informality may be linked to lowering academic standards for inner city student achievement. By discursively delineating the “academic” inner city school from “the rest,” Earl implies that most inner city schools are actually not academic spaces at all. This discursive delineation works to identity the inner city students in the academic inner city school as unique. What Earl fails to identify is that academically inclined students exist at all schools. He also fails to recognize that is possible for schools to serve low income and minority students while being “academic” schools. It is up to the teachers and to the school’s administration to meet the needs of all students and to set standards for achievement that will benefit students and their learning. An inner city school, in and of itself, cannot be the reason why a teacher uses a more relaxed approach to teaching.

**Reading Classroom Management as a Teaching Issue**

In Tara’s her narrative below, she witnessed a lockdown at one of her inner city field placements. This witnessing cast the inner city school as a violent space where incidents such
as lockdowns occur. Tara compared the lockdown at this low-income school with her father’s experience as a teacher in a middle-class, suburban school. She used the occurrence of the lockdown to justify her belief that inner city schools take teachers out of their middle-class comfort zones. I asked Tara to describe any learning about inner city schools that she gleaned from her field placements. She emphasized that classroom management was the most important issue for inner city teachers:

Anita: All right, and so this question says, “Describe any learning about inner city schools that took place on your practicum.” But I think most of what you’ve been describing has been that. But was there anything you wanted to add? So was there anything that you learned on your practicum about inner city schools that say, that really kind of sticks out with you as, like, “If I hadn’t come to this practicum [field placement], I probably would not have learned X.”

Tara: I think I learned…just again, in classroom management, how important it is. And how you need to have it right off the bat…and you need to have a really strong one [classroom management]. Which I… it was just…it was an interesting experience because my dad is in a board [school board], but it’s a very middle- to upper-class board and very predominantly White, with these little middle to Upper-class students. So when I was calling him and being, like, you know like… “How’d this happen?” And we had …oh, what is it called? When they have to lock all the doors to the school?

Anita: A lockdown?

Tara: Yeah, like they had sort of like… a semi-lockdown once, and I was telling him. And he was like… ‘You know, I taught for 20 years, and this like…one thing and he’s like, We’ve never had a lockdown.’ So just…it was interesting I guess too… and I mean, that was the schools that I went to [where her father taught] and grew up in. So it was just interesting to have him there and kind of do the ‘Oh, my God,’ and you know, he was very much, like, ‘You cannot compare these students to,’ like…you know, like the ones here because it’s just…it’s two separate worlds.

Tara compares her own middle-to upper-class schooling with the inner city school of her field placement. Although both schools are predominantly White, her father’s middle-to upper-class school is read as normal or as a safe space. The lockdown that occurs at the low-income school constructs this school as a dangerous space. The lockdown clearly crystallizes her belief that although the students are White, they are more prone to the occurrence of
violence in their lives because the lockdown involved an altercation with a father and a child on school property.

In this narrative, the conceptual framework that Tara uses is one that suggests that poverty is to violence as middle-class-ness is to peace. This is a dangerous assumption because it sets up a situation where violence is expected and suspected with students from low-income families. The opposite is also true. The expectation of violence as a function of poverty means that the violence, when it occurs where there is evidence of wealth, can go unnoticed and unreported.

The absence of a lockdown in her father’s 20 years of teaching is juxtaposed to the presence of a lockdown in only a few short weeks at the inner city school. This discrepancy in time, as it relates to the threat of violence, shapes the inner city school as a volatile space, and one that is not conducive to student learning. Further, the term “lock down” is often used in prison contexts when a riot occurs. The use of such carceral language (Shabazz, 2009) familiarizes students with prison-like discourse and routines. It also familiarizes teachers with prison-like discourse and routines with inner city students, as opposed to middle-class, suburban ones. Tara witnessed the inner city school as being a site of both poverty and violence. In the absence of in-depth critical knowledge in her teacher education coursework, Tara left this field placement with such beliefs firmly entrenched into her psyche. The opposite of her inner city field placement is her father’s school. Her short stay at an inner city school reinforces the “normalcy” of her father’s middle-class school. As normal, her father’s school and the school that she herself attended, represents middle-to upper-class civility and safety.

During my interview, Madison explained that respect plays a key role in understanding inner city students and classroom management. Madison suggested that
students can often clearly identify when a teacher actually respects who they are as individuals. She compared this to teachers who stereotype inner city students and place them in particular categories:

Anita: Okay, so I just wanted to kind of talk about that for a second. All right, so with…this is about classroom management, with respect to classroom management what comes to mind when you think about inner city schools?

Madison: Yes, respect. I think that’s one thing that’s been taught in a different way from conventional methods… is the value and the level of importance respect plays in an inner city classroom. I pick that because it was a general term. Students know right away if you don’t respect them or if you have them in a category. They know right away if you’re pretending to say one thing and do another. If you need to pretend, you’re better off to tell them that you’re pretending and you don’t know, than you are to try and pretend like you know, you know…um, and when you talk to the students the comments that you get are even going to be, ‘You’re disrespecting me, you’re not trying to respect, I don’t need to respect you until you respect me’. So really, you need to center what you’re doing about respect and if you respect yourself and you’re being honest to yourself and how you’re presenting yourself. So that’s why I picked that. Now the other part of that is that sometimes the students haven’t been taught a mainstream understanding of respect. And when I say mainstream, it’s becoming less mainstream in terms of…but our traditional Anglo-British, you know 1960’s ideas of respect, you know…

Anita: What does that look like, that traditional model?

Madison: You know [said sarcastically] if you’re expecting them to come into a classroom where the kids are all going to be sitting quietly in neat little seats and they’ve all passed the fingernail test, because they’ve all had to scrub their fingers as they come in… and the clothes are all going to be fitting just as they’re supposed to because they’re in little uniforms and there’s very strict dress code, with the boys’ hair are cut short…spots… and when you come in they all stand up on the floor and say ‘Good morning Mr. So and So’ or ‘Good morning Sir, good morning Madame’. That’s not going to happen. So that’s not…that’s not a reality in any school today. But I mean definitely you can’t go in with this being the reality that their parents might have gone through. They’re [the students] not going to have been taught this and that’s given the student has no issues on the plate. In all schools you have students with other issues on the plate. You have students coming from refugee camps, you have students coming from disaster areas for whatever reason, your environmental, you have students coming from destroyed families whether it’s destroyed by State or destroyed by chemical substances i.e. alcohol or drugs or whatever reasons you know, you add that on top of your ordinary students, your 1960’s definitions of respect and order in a classroom are going to be unrealistic.
Madison is articulating Milner and Tenore’s (2010) concept of culturally relevant classroom management. The researchers stated that classroom management must always be approached using the cultures of students. They stated that students are keenly aware when teachers do not respect them:

Students recognize when there is unnecessary distance between themselves and their teachers, and such disconnections shape students’ actions. The students often question, “Why should I adhere to this teacher’s management desires when she or he does not really care about me?” In this respect, students see their misbehavior as a way to distance themselves from uncaring and disrespectful teachers, and the cycle seems to continue in spite of teachers’ desires to correct student behavior. (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 567)

I ask Madison to share with me how a teacher raised with the traditional model of schooling might come to know that respect might be an issue in schools that serve low-income and minority students:

Madison: Their parents [the teachers raised on the traditional model] were in those schools. I think in the same way that you go out to, maybe some place exotic off the top of my head… Hong Kong, no not even Hong Kong, a small town in China and try… and teaching English to British standards, you’re just going to be yelling ‘I can’t do that’ because they obviously have their own way of doing things. I think you need to look at every area as… has their own way of doing things, and as I said, I… from what I saw in the Faculty [teacher education program] a lot of students [pre-service teachers] being much younger than me, with a lot less life experience…. they [the pre-service teachers] would almost need like a reality based week of cultural interpretation. And it’s not cultural…I think that’s a fairly loaded word right now, but it is, it’s a… in terms of, I guess… use the terms or word culture or business culture, a school culture. And if you don’t know where you’re from you can’t even begin to respect where the students are coming from.

Here, Madison’s counter narrative indicates that the model of schooling in which some teachers were raised, is the model of schooling that they attempt to implement in inner city schools, despite the fact that the culture of schools have changed. She explains here that culturally responsive approaches to classroom management might be more useful in inner city contexts, instead of blindly applying standardized classroom management practices to students in all schooling situations.
Results of this research indicate that the field placement often revealed ineffective classroom management strategies by Host Teachers. In the quote below, Earl explained that he and a Host Teacher at one of his placements visited an inner city classroom and made observations about the teacher and the students. Earl and the Host Teacher stood at the back of the classroom observing the interaction between the teacher and her students:

Earl: But again, there’s lots of students who are just talking and things being thrown and things like that and whether she [the classroom teacher] saw them or not, we’re not sure. Again, just sitting in the back you see things and you’re like, ‘Oh, does that always go on?’ We could see them doing their cell phones underneath the desks, so I think, I guess those sorts of things, but also there wasn’t as much routine in her [the teacher’s] classroom. There wasn’t an established routine that we [he and the Host Teacher] tried to have in our classroom and I think that’s part of the thing too. But I think you can have routine no matter what the environment and so maybe that was just her personal teaching style.

Similarly, Tara’s narrative revealed a sense in which strategies used by the Host Teacher were observed to be ineffective, since they were inconsistent and confusing to the students.

Tara: Well, I know, like...the first teacher, it was... I guess it was hard for me because I’m not a yeller. Like, I don’t have a loud voice. So I find that really difficult…with the kids, and that’s what he did a lot. It was just, ‘You’re too loud’, and then yelling. And he tried to implement, like, almost a reward system. But then when I was there…the he didn’t…he didn’t explain it very well to them. ‘Cause it was kind of a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ kind of thing, but he hadn’t…he just hadn’t explained it well to them so it was all of a sudden, like, ‘Oh, you have an X against you’ for something, and I was, like, ‘Huh? Like, I don’t understand’. So they’re what, eight, like seven, eight years old, right? So I don’t know if they understand. And then sometimes, like, the rewards would come out Friday, but sometimes he missed them. And then there were times he was, like, ‘Oh, your reward was that we went to the computer lab, and you got to go on the computer’. Which they did any way so, to me I’m, like, ‘Well, that’s not a reward’. Yeah, so I mean he didn’t… yeah, it…I don’t know, he yelled a lot when it would…just got too out of control. And then…yeah, that system that didn’t really work.

Tara’s narrative illustrates a sense in which her conceptions of inner city teachers were gained through observations of teachers on her field placement. These observations, in the absence of classroom spaces where pre-service teachers can speak to both effective and ineffective strategies observed, determine the manner in which inner city teachers are seen. Because
Tara was left to make sense of these observations on her own, her impression of this particular inner city teacher is one of ineffectiveness. It is clear that she does not want to model her own teaching after the example set by the Host Teacher, since she could clearly see that his strategies failed to have an impact with the students. Ineffective classroom management strategies can work to reinforce negative stereotypes about inner city teaching pedagogy. This is exacerbated when pre-service teachers are not provided with ample opportunities to think through larger structural forces that inform the culture of inner city schools.

Reading Classroom Management as a Gendered Construct

Participants in this study approached their identity as women and men in differing ways. Bredz suggested that there was nothing that a male teacher could do that she could not do as female. However, Tara rationalized that her soft voice and her lack of presence was a concern for her with respect to teaching at an inner city school. She described one of her male colleagues who worked at her field placement and the effect that he had with her colleagues at her placement:

Tara: Actually, now, like… so the guy [pre-service teacher] that was at our school, X is, like… was, like… huge, like…really tall. And it… just a big guy and… yeah, he was the teacher candidate [pre-service teacher], yeah. And he was, like, a rugby player. Like, you know, so he was a really big guy. And I remember, like…both, one of the other teacher candidates and I saying, ‘cause he walked into the seven-eight [split-grade] class and I was, like… I think they, I don’t know if respect is the right word, but he, because he was bigger and he had more of a presence, he could walk into that class and… I mean, they still challenged him, and pushed him, and you know, did all that…but I felt, like… he could overcome that quicker than somebody like me, where I’m, like…I’m not as big and I’m a girl and I don’t have the loud voice. So for me, stepping in, I really, just in terms of being the girl, being, like…not as big and stuff… it’s… I guess I see it as… I have to know my classroom management goal. Like, I have to be able to gain the kid’s respect a lot quicker.
Compare this to Tristan who explained that his male-ness accorded him a level of respect, especially among what he referred to as “alpha males”:

Anita: Now we are just going to talk about classroom management for a moment and with respect to classroom management what comes to mind when you think about inner city students and especially in relation to your own teaching:

Tristan: I had the one incident that I had mentioned... that one of the young boys who is quite large. He is a basketball player, so he is 6’5”, 6’6”. And when I walked in the classroom he was being confrontational with my Associate Teacher [Host Teacher] who was a twenty-seven year old woman; exceptional teacher, but was very caring and nurturing, but wasn’t a big force in that kind of way. So, it was one of those occasions where I just happened to walk in at the right time and suggest that he sit down with a certain tone and he did.

Although Tristan is a pre-service teacher, his being male accords him more respect than the actual classroom teacher who is female. Similarly, Earl felt that his gendered identity as male was actually an asset in an inner city school setting, despite the fact that he considered his race to be a barrier. He suggested that his physical size and his ability to exert a certain presence meant that he would be able to handle himself in an inner city schooling context:

Anita: When you think about your gendered identity as male what comes to mind when you think about teaching at an inner-city school?

Earl: As much as I talk about those worries and concerns, I also feel that I would be able to have the presence and not put up with crap, if crap is going to go down. So, I guess I also...and again maybe it’s an arrogant thing, but I think that I can also be a positive male role model in that sense, cause some of these students may not have positive male role models at home. So I don’t see my gender as a barrier, if anything, I would see it as an asset in that environment.

It is fascinating to compare the tone of Earl and Tristan’s narrative to Tara’s. All three participants use the term “presence.” In fact, Tristan uses the term “force” in his narrative.

While Tristan and Earl both say with conviction that they are able to handle themselves in an inner city classroom, Tara is unsure about her presence because she equates her gender with passivity, weakness, and a lack of presence. Tara uses her soft voice, her size, and her gender to suggest that she would become vulnerable in an inner city context. Tara fails to realize that
her soft voice in an inner city classroom does constitute a “presence” in the same manner in which a harsh voice does. Yet, the use of the term presence by these participants almost always refers to one that is able to apply force if it is required.

After repeated readings of Tara’s narratives, I began to wonder if perhaps her concerns about classroom management were articulated as a way of avoiding her true feelings about teaching in schools that serve low-income and minority students. I will never know the truth. In fact, her true feelings may lie somewhere between what she expressed to me in good faith and the feelings I walked away with after my interview with her. It is clear that, given her self-identified middle-to upper-class background, her exposure to high levels of poverty at her first inner city field placement, coupled with the absence of theory at the TEP, solidified her sense that the inner city school was a foreign space.

The narratives of Earl and Tristan are instructive because they reveal the extent to which some male teachers are able to perform hegemonic masculinity if the situation called for it. Tristan speaks of using a certain tone to control the male student who defied the pleas of his teacher. Earl discusses being able to handle himself and not having to “put up with crap, if crap is going to go down.” Both of these examples illustrate the extent to which they have access to hegemonic displays of masculinity in ways that are not available to all women. This is an important consideration for understanding the discourse of female fear in inner city schooling contexts. If there is a real physical threat to a female teacher in any school setting, to what extent does the teacher’s presence place her in a vulnerable situation that some male teachers may not find troublesome at all?

The data presented in this chapter reveal a sense in which displays of hegemonic masculinity are conceived of as being appropriate and needed at the inner city school. This hegemonic masculinity, whether it is performed by a male or female teacher, is what is
expected because of an underlying narrative that casts inner city spaces as dangerous.

Hegemonic displays of masculinity work to render the male body in place in the inner city school. This common sense approach about who and what are needed, with respect to teacher bodies in inner city schools, silences conversations about why such bodies, and their corresponding behaviours, are constructed as being required in inner city schools, in particular.

Reading Classroom Management as Teacher Success

During my interview with Tara, I inquired into what it meant for a teacher to lose control of a classroom. I asked this question because her narrative seemed to convey a sense in which such a loss of control might have detrimental effects on teachers:

Anita: What would, what do you think… would happen in an inner city context with a teacher that… say… who… who lacks ‘strong’ classroom management? Like… and how do you see that playing out?

Tara: Uh, the kids would be out of control. I think. Like, I look at any of the supply people [occasional teachers] who come into the school, right? And if you don’t know, if you don’t know how to deal with the kids, or you, you know, or if you lack that [ability to control] the kids will walk all over you and they do take advantage of it for sure. And, yeah…and you’ll have lost control of the class, which means… and I don’t know… how you get that back once it…once it’s gone, you know…

Anita: You… you raise the idea of control. What…what do you think that means to a new teacher? Like, in terms of how they control the classroom. How important do you think that is to a new teacher?

Tara: I guess, I think…yeah, I guess for me, I look at it as, like…that’s… like, I know there’s the curriculum and all that. And that’s not my concern. Like, I know I can teach it. Like, regardless…like… I know I can…make a good lesson and teach it. But for me, that [classroom management] is a huge concern. It’s just having…and having the control where it’s, like, okay… like… however you get the children’s attention. And like… hands up or whatever you do, that they actually listen so that you can move on [with the curriculum]. Because if you can’t…and if they’re not listening to you, and you know, and they’re going off and doing whatever…while…I mean, you can’t teach them. You can’t…you really can’t do anything at that point. So I think just that ability to make sure that okay, like, you know, most of them are ‘on task’. Most of them are working. You know, like, when I need their attention…because again, if
something happens…you need to make sure that you…have a way of getting their attention. And that you can…okay, yeah, like, fire bell goes off, like, this is what we’re doing [the routine for a fire bell]… and it’s not the kids going, ‘The fire bell’s on’ [she is flaring her arms]. Like, you know, like, not that. And that’s…I guess going in…that’s a concern for me.

Tara mentions twice that being able to get the student’s attention is a concern for her. Even though she indicates that she is comfortable with her teaching, her narrative reveals that she is insecure about her abilities with respect to classroom management. Never does she suggest that she will be able to develop rapport with her students and will be able to create an atmosphere in her classroom of mutual respect.

I cite Britzman (1991) once again, who theorized about teacher concern about control in the classroom. Britzman (1991) argued that teacher alienation from theory and their initiation into a profession that privileges the field experience and “baptism by fire” means that “student teachers rarely have the space to...consistently theorize about their lived experience” (p. 49).

On June 15, 2010 I wrote the following memo concerning teacher success with respect to classroom management:

Today, Tristan explained that he felt that new teachers wanted and needed to “feel successful.” I think that this is an important point to explore because of the implications that it has for teachers teaching in ‘inner city’ contexts. When I heard Tristan utter these words, it became clear to me some pre-service teachers may avoid teaching in the ‘inner city’ because it could mean that they may not succeed at it. In fact, if the average pre-service teacher’s race, SES, upbringing in terms of place (i.e. suburban), religion etc. is far removed from the experiences of certain cultural groups in ‘inner city’ contexts, I can see how the ‘inner city’, even as a concept that has never been lived, becomes the place ‘not to be’. (Jack-Davies, Memo: June 15, 2010)

In speaking to Tara, it occurred to me that her preoccupation with classroom management could be read through a lens of teacher success.

At first glance, a preoccupation with classroom management can be seen as a need to control students. However, when classroom management is read as pedagogy or text, on
some level, mastery of classroom management becomes a mastery of teaching (Britzman, 1991). The reverse is also true. Failure at effective classroom management is often viewed through a lens of failure at teaching (Britzman, 1991). During my interview with Tristan, he shared with me the tremendous sense in which teachers “are programmed to only go to where it’s successful.” He goes on to say, “the irony of teachers is they all did well in school otherwise they wouldn’t be there”:

Anita: You know tell me something. Based on the students [pre-service teachers] that you saw, like your peers, do you think, what percentage of them do you think would actually end up teaching at an inner city school or would have a desire to teach, just because, you don’t know this in terms of numbers… but just based on what you saw?

Tristan: I would say that there is a small group that would really look forward to it and relish that experience amongst others, but I would say that most would not. Most of them would not want that school. And it’s not, you know, is it academic or educational snobbery or whatever? I don’t know, but oh, I want to go to that school. I think the same way some of my perspectives are only mine and likely flawed, right because until I experience more of it, I am going to be naïve to the real life [of inner city schools]. But, I think some of them [pre-service teachers] are programmed to only go to where it’s successful and the irony of teachers is they all did well in school, otherwise they wouldn’t be there.

It is this idea of success that I explore more here.

The need for teachers to feel successful is one reason why Tara and Earl feel insecure about teaching in an inner city context. Teachers are invited to believe that control of students in a classroom setting equals success at teaching (Britzman, 1991). Controlled students, or students who “sit quietly and buy into it,” are good students. I question the extent to which teachers who are unable to control students in classrooms are themselves punished by being labelled as “bad teachers” and what such a practice might promote (Britzman, 1991). Control, as success at teaching, means that the teacher can cover the curriculum, given the increasing pressure that teachers are under to satisfy specific strands of the standardized curriculum in Ontario schools (Solomon & Allen, 2001; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001). Covering the curriculum makes a teacher successful.
The hegemonic narrative operating for several participants is that inner city schools are non-academic spaces or spaces where with little expectations surrounding pedagogy, teaching, and learning. Such schools are also constructed as spaces were pedagogy, teaching, and learning do not have the opportunity to flourish. Constructed as a non-academic space, this narrative suggests that the students entering these spaces are not there to learn. This same narrative, which constructs low income and minority parents as not caring because they are so busy trying to survive, suggests that education falls off their list of pressing priorities, behind food, shelter, and clothing. Because inner city students are not viewed as wanting or needing to learn, and because the perception exists that their parents are too busy to care about their learning, the teacher’s job becomes that much more difficult. It is more difficult to cover a curriculum with students and parents who do not care about education. This puts the teacher “at-risk,” to use an expression that is often used to refer to low income and minority students, of failing to teach. It also means that students who are already portrayed as at-risk, fail to learn.

**Conclusion: Creating an Un-Natural Discourse Surrounding Classroom Management**

I hope to create an “un-natural” discourse surrounding classroom management for inner city schools. By un-natural, I mean a discourse that Kobayashi and Peake (1994) refer to as “a continued critique of the normalization of race and gender” (p. 238). An un-natural discourse also involves the use of language and political strategies to challenge natural categories (p. 238). For instance, the portrayal of the suburbs as female space has meaning for the simultaneous and mirror image construction of the city as male space (Mitchell, 2000). In order to teach effectively in inner city contexts, teachers must build relationships with inner city communities (Murrell, 2000; Smaller, 2007). Much of the discourse that
circulates within our culture invites us to believe that inner city students, as unruly, need to be approached with disciplinary measures already in place. This discourse has tangible consequences on education policies with respect to the hiring of classroom teachers.

The data revealed that classroom management emerged as one of the most important strategies for teachers to master before they can teach in inner city schools. Given the above sentiments expressed by pre-service teachers, I question the manner in which future teachers might approach inner city students and their parents, given the power imbalances that are often inherent in teacher/student and teacher/parent relationships. Foucault (1990) wrote that power is everywhere and is produced from one moment to the next (p. 93). This power and its responsible use, is an issue about which pre-service teachers must be critically aware, especially when working with marginalized students. This is the reason why critical work that is conceptual in nature, as opposed to one that is prescriptive in nature, must play a more central role in the education of future teachers.

I echo James and Saul (2007) who emphasized that schooling in Canadian inner city contexts must address issues such as race, marginalization, and exclusion especially as they involve immigrant students. Educators must become aware of student experiences and the social and cultural aspects of their lives, complete with the development of culturally relevant programs that take their needs into account. In speaking of classroom management strategies, participants often suggested that the TEP from which they graduated offered no formal courses on classroom management. Bredz emphasized that she would have benefited from theory on classroom management strategies:

Anita: Now, in terms of classroom management, as you talked about… at least having some idea of what it is that you want to do from the get-go. What comes to mind when you think of inner city students? Classroom management, because I know in teachers college this is an issue that comes up over and over and over again.
Bredz: In terms of teachers college… I think was really lacking. It’s not something that we were taught at school. It was something that you were thrown into the pool and had to deal with, that I think is going to be a huge challenge for me as a teacher... To me, classroom management is key and it was not offered. It simply was not offered. It was discussed...you know, the topic was raised. The issue was raised. The concern and the importance was discussed, but there was no grounding in the sense that there was something to say that, ‘Okay, open this book’, I can read this and I’ll try this and I’ll try this and I’ll try this...I believe it’s going to be completely trial and error, where you are going to...I think you kind of look at it like you just dive into the water and find a way to swim, right.

I ask Bredz to share with me what she would have liked to have seen instead:

Anita: So if they could have offered you something different from what they did offer you, what would that look like for you? What would have made you more satisfied?

Bredz: I think a course, like how I did all my different courses. They would have courses, like the social studies and courses like X course and the rest of it. And I think something like that, that every student must do, right. It’s compulsory, each to go more into depth, right, on things [strategies] that have worked in the past.

I argue here that we need to reframe classroom management discourse in inner city contexts in order to shift the existing discourse away from a teacher’s need to control students. First, it is imperative for educators to stop equating effective classroom management with successful, good or “strong” teaching. Before pre-service and new teachers can move beyond a pedagogy of fear about teaching in inner city schools, they must be able to unpack hegemonic conceptions of inner city students.

Pre-service teachers, in particular, must be provided with alternative models of what successful teaching looks like and must be encouraged to think through the meaning of successful teaching for students who are marginalized. The tendency for teachers to use standardized, middle-class models for classroom management for example, that may not have meaning or relevance in an inner city school setting, will prove to be unsuccessful in the long term (McCready & Soloway, 2010). If covering strands on a curriculum document is mastered, yet low-income and minority students feel demoralized, alienated, and silenced in classrooms, this is not a successful teaching situation at all. Instead, it is one that ensures that
teacher accountability remains intact. An emphasis on classroom management works to
sharpen the lens on teacher success as opposed to student success.

Chapter ten broadly examines teacher education policy with respect to critical theory.
It begins with participant views on the role that their TEP played in exploring inner city
schooling as a Canadian issue and its impact on their roles as future teachers. It presents an
overview of research findings and specifically examines the relationship between teacher
education policies on equity and their link to teacher education curriculum on critical
pedagogy. The chapter ends with recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Education,
TEPs in the province on Ontario, and local school boards.
Chapter Ten

Implications for Education Policy

Introduction

During the spring of 2010, I met seven new teachers who lent their voices to this research. Through their voices and the stories that they shared, I was provided with a glimpse into how they experienced teacher education in the province of Ontario and inner city schooling contexts. In conducting a qualitative study, I was interested in learning about the social relations of schooling through their eyes. I was not interested in learning about the views of all pre-service teachers or all new teachers. Instead, I wanted to tease out those tiny textured moments (Lewis, in conversation) that reveal what is often hidden from view. By the completion of the final focus group session in August 2010, these new teachers had already taken their first along the paths of their new careers. In the province of Ontario, each of these new teachers is able to apply for and accept work as teachers in an inner city school, despite the fact that their TEP provided no formalized teaching on the subject. I emphasize this point because these teachers represent a small sample of all teachers graduating from TEPs across the province. Despite their desire, their narratives revealed a sense in which they are insecure and unsure about their abilities to teach in schools that serve low income and minority students.

In this chapter, I explore teacher education policy. I begin by presenting data on the role that the TEP played in problematizing inner city schooling in Canada. I present these
voices to illustrate that the meaning that these participants made of teaching in inner city schools is directly linked to the education that they received. Teacher education programs such as the ones from which the participants graduated, officially certify pre-service teachers to work in low-income and minority schools, even as they relegate critical issues to the status of elective knowledge. This certification provides teachers with the license to educate students whose life experiences often do not mirror that of their teachers.

This certification is an official exercise of power that is backed by university credentials. Such credentials are proof that teachers have met a certain standard that qualifies them to teach. However, I question the meaning of this certification for schools that serve low income and minority students. Teacher certification in programs that relegate issues of race, gender, social class and so on, to the margins, does not, in fact, certify such teachers to teach in low-income and minority schools. I argue that the certification that graduates from such programs receive certifies them to teach, even though that certification fails to equip them with the conceptual tools that will benefit low-income and minority students. This is a fact that all school boards and schools in charge of hiring new teachers must seriously consider. Such institutions must begin to problematize the meaning of teacher certification in the province as it specifically relates to teachers working with marginalized students.

An Overview of Results: The Role of the TEP in Addressing Inner City Schooling in Canada

In this section, I discuss the role of the TEP in engaging the participants in discourse about inner city schooling. For a few participants, the lack of formal discourse provided by the TEP, coupled with the negative stories that circulated about inner city schools by their colleagues and professors, created a sense in which the inner city school setting was made
Other. I present each participant’s narrative in its entirety in order to provide a snapshot of the range of views that were expressed.

I must also add that the two mandatory courses that the program offers were cited as starting points for discussion about such issues as race, gender, social class. In this way, the program must be recognized for attempting to cover the issue, even though this attempt was considered to be insufficient in providing the necessary framework for the pre-service teachers to think through inner city schooling issues. This reveals the extent to which critical pedagogy is only beginning to make inroads in some mainstream TEPs. Each participant was asked to comment:

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues

Bredz: ‘Challenging, better be ready’

Anita: And was it offered in class or… like was it offered during coursework?

Bredz: It was something that just floated through the room. It was not… I don’t know if you know what I mean. You must…it was not really a lesson to say, you know, where this was okay, ‘This is where we’re going to start. This is where we’re going to go and this is what we’re going to learn’. But it was something that was just ‘Inner city schools, are you going to that school? Do you have any idea what it takes to teach in that kind of school?’ Are you sure you are up for that kind of challenge?

Compare the informal discourse of fear that Bredz experienced with Earl’s narrative where he discusses that he enrolled in an elective course on adolescent literacy and was provided with some theoretical grounding in inner city schooling during that course:

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues.

Earl: I took a class on adolescent literacy and so in that course we talked a lot about students who were going to be struggling with literacy in the classroom and so… again, this can often be students who are from a lower economic status. Our professor had experience teaching out West and especially at schools with large Aboriginal population, which is something that we didn’t even get into in this whole discussion. But that’s something that I don’t personally have any experience with, but just think of that cause that’s a whole other side to this issue. But beyond that, not really at all, and then that was an elective course.
By enrolling in this elective course, Earl was provided a framework to think through literacy as it may be experienced by marginalized students. In this case, the professor discussed the needs of First Nations/Aboriginal students. By enrolling in this elective course, in which only a select number of pre-service teachers can enroll, Earl was able to gather some knowledge about working with marginalized students. Those pre-service teachers who did not enroll in this course were not privy to this knowledge in the same way that Earl was. Yet, those teachers are now certified to teach in schools that service low-income and minority students.

In Andy’s narrative, it is clear that he is unsure about what was covered in his coursework relating to inner city schooling:

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues.

Andy: Hmm, I feel that all my classes definitely touched on the inner-city schools and, um, I [inaudible] believe that all the classes at least, touched it once. Um, in our X class, our module on social issues, we looked at inner-city schools briefly. Um, and then, as well as my math and chemistry classes, we had a chance to speak about activities that we could do, um, let’s say, in an inner-city school. But we also had other teachers come speak to us with their experience in teaching that subject in an inner-city school. Another part was during our workshop days. I can’t remember which ones, but there were two where we had… Well, one was a principal, and the other was a previous teacher, an ex-teacher that now works for the Ministry [of Education], and they all had experiences in an inner-city school.

Andy discusses the fact that each course touched on the topic and provides examples from a few different areas including a workshop and two guest speakers. Madison discusses the sense in which she was made to feel Other in the program:

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues.

Madison: They did it in terms of Other. Very, very clearly in terms of Other. There was a normative effect of, “Everybody here is White.” And it really… by the end of the year it started to annoy me because I’m not White. I’m not… I’m not 22. I think I was… I was insulted during the Convocation address where he [the speaker] sat down there and talked about us going back home to our parents’ places. I am the parent. I have two kids. You know, “You don’t know anything yet”, you know. “You only have another ten year…”, you know. No, I’ve already worked for ten years. And
what was particularly affronting of the whole thing was that the...we had Tech people [pre-service teachers in the Technical Education program] in my graduating class who are, by definition, they had to work for ten years, you know... And literally, the gall of this idiot who is sitting there, “Da, da, da, you are so young. You will have to make choices about who you marry.” Like, shut up! If you don’t know anything about education, say, “I’m sorry, I can’t give the speech.” It was really awful, you know? And I think the worst part was that...was his own self-possessed knowledge that he knew that we were all young, eager, White go-getters.

Madison’s narrative reveals a sense in which difference as a whole was negated in the program. She speaks of the program tailoring its curriculum to a predominantly young and White pre-service teaching population because this group represents the majority in teacher education.

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues.

Tristan: As I mentioned we talked last time, I was relatively disappointed with how we dealt with that [inner city schooling] among many other topics. The best thing that we did to talk anything about inner city schools was on the last day when that...

Anita:  Guest speaker right...

Tristan: Yeah and she was phenomenal; a phenomenally talented speaker. Very engaging, which made it, probably, the best speaker that we had in the last part.

Tristan discusses his disappointment about the manner in which inner city schooling was taken up. However, he explains that a guest speaker who was brought in on the final day of the program to lecture on her teaching in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community was “phenomenal.” Audrey shared that a professor in the program made informal comments about “tough” schools while handing out field placement assignments to her and her colleagues:

Anita: Describe how your B.Ed. program examined inner city schooling issues.

Audrey: Yeah, I’m thinking, sorry. I have to laugh [by my asking the question]. I’m just wondering, maybe it’s the course I didn’t take, one of those elective courses. I really... I think that the one class tried, um, and failed. I really don’t think they did, no. The odd professor would make, um, a helpful suggestion, but overall, it wasn’t really identified. Um, when our practicum assignments [field placements] were handed out, actually, having grown up in the city, I knew where some of the schools
were. And some of the reactions [by the pre-service teachers]. I was surprised at the reaction from the professor who handed them [the school placements] out. He was also [saying], ‘Well, that’s a tougher school’. I said, ‘Pardon me, it’s not that bad’. ‘Well, how would you know? Well, because I went to the school right down the street and I played with the kids that went to that school’. And to listen to the teachers, teacher candidates [pre-service teachers] when they came back from the Practicum [field placement] and just put the kids down, and well, ‘They don’t care about learning, they don’t care about’…I’m just like, ‘Well, you know what, with that sad attitude you brought in, then they’re gonna live up to that’.

Audrey’s narrative reveals a sense in which the discourse that surrounded inner city schooling was couched in a language of fear with “that’s a tougher school” or a language of deficit, “they don’t care about learning.” It is clear that Audrey sees the link between teacher attitudes and student achievement when she says, “well, you know what, with that sad attitude you brought in, then they’re gonna live up to that.”

When the narratives are examined for spatial meaning, inner city schooling as a pedagogical issue lacks an actual place in the curriculum of the TEP program itself. According to Bredz, it lacks “grounding.” It simply floats and is relegated to the margins and the periphery of the program. The narratives reveal that the topic was either not covered at all or was mentioned in passing. When the discursive practices of the program are examined, inner city schools are constructed as places that are challenging. When Bredz’ is asked, “Are you up for that challenge?” and “Do you have any idea what it takes to teach in that kind of school?” the speaker discursively casts the inner city school as too difficult for a novice teacher. The program does not offer much to counter or challenge such statements.

Using Massey’s (1994) concept of space and time, the placement of the guest speaker on the last day of the program, as indicated by Tristan’s narrative, is telling. Tristan along with several participants described the speaker who spoke about her experiences teaching in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community, as phenomenal. Her placement on the final day of the program not only works to render the lecture an “add on” (Lund, 1998), but it
also prevented pre-service teachers from integrating its content with learning that took place in other areas of the curriculum. This “stand alone” approach (Lund, 1998; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001; Picower, 2009) is often used in teacher education courses and fails to make real connections with topics that are being discussed in other areas of the curriculum, such as assessment.

Picower (2009) argued that critical education must take an integrated approach if this pedagogy is to have any impact on how pre-service teachers teach:

A crucial starting point for reform is that forms of critical education must be integrated across the curriculum. These types of critical education, such as social justice education, are both fields as well as processes. An independent course on critical multicultural education or the like needs to remain a mandatory part of the teacher education course load so students can be introduced to the field while having a place to critically examine who they are and how that impacts how they think about who they will teach. However, because the spectrum of critical concepts is so broad and because students’ hegemonic understandings are so deeply rooted, inquiry into issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religious diversity should not be corralled solely into this one course in one semester. (Picower, 2009, p. 212)

Andy remained the only participant who suggested that the program covered inner city schooling as a topic yet, in his words, it was “touched on” in his classes. Overall, the topic was not covered as a legitimate (Giroux, 1981) form of knowledge that the pre-service teachers must know before graduating and possibly working in inner city schooling contexts.

**Interwoven Ideologies about Inner City Schooling**

Participants often used interwoven ideologies to describe their meaning-making about teaching in a Canadian inner city schooling context. As interweaving, their discussion about one topic often contained elements from other topics as they related to teaching in an inner city context. By interweaving, I mean to suggest that the narratives were not flat, but complex and dense. The narratives also had to be analyzed for meaning beyond the words that were said, in order to determine the meaning of silences. These narratives were both
hegemonic and critical and each participant offered critiques of “common sense” understandings about inner city schooling at different moments. However, individual narratives revealed that some participants invested in hegemonic understandings of inner city schooling more often than others did. I outline the interweaving ideologies that the narratives presented for each of the major themes in this research. Inner city schools were constructed as:

(a) dangerous spaces with unruly students,
(b) spaces where teaching and learning is secondary to the management of students,
(c) attended by racialized and immigrant students,
(d) not expected to be in Canada,
(e) not expected to be in small Canadian cities, not attended by White students,
(f) jail-like in films; more so for American schools that Canadian ones
(g) an academic wasteland for ineffective teachers.

Inner city students were constructed as:

(a) unruly and out of control,
(b) taking cues from teachers with respect to their behaviour,
(c) coming from “deficit” homes and communities,
(d) diverse or are immigrants,
(e) needing to be respected by teachers before respect will be returned,
(f) receiving low expectations by teachers for their achievement
(g) naturally gravitate toward gangs,
(i) racialized with surprise expressed by the presence of White inner city students

Inner city parents were constructed as:

(a) caring more about the real world as opposed to education,
(b) being marginalized in schools through informal policies,
(c) uneducated and may have had difficulty working with schools,
(d) employed in menial work,
(e) involved in substance abuse,
(f) hard-working and caring toward their children

Inner City Teachers were constructed as:

(a) saviour of at-risk kids,
(b) fish out of water in the inner city school,
(c) simply waiting for retirement,
(d) young or old and without family,
(e) dud: they can’t teach anywhere else,
(f) male teachers being better suited for the danger inherent in inner city schools,
(g) female teachers being vulnerable in inner city schools,
(h) male teachers being able to call upon hegemonic forms of masculinity in such schools,

Classroom management strategies in inner city schools were discussed in relation to:

(a) inner city teachers needing to have a “presence” and strong classroom management skills,
(b) teachers being unable to teach effectively without effective classroom management strategies
(c) non-academic students requiring more management,
(d) the school itself negating a teacher’s ability to focus on curriculum and pedagogy,
(e) male teachers being more effective at managing students than female teachers
These interwoven ideologies greatly impact the overall sense in which the inner city school is read as “less than” schools. Such portraits of schools that serve low-income and minority students displace attention from those that benefit the most from the sustenance of such images within the wider culture. An inner city school that is rendered ineffective implicates all bodies in such a space. These bodies are often marginalized bodies to begin with. Such constructions work to blame inner city students, parents, and teachers for the “decline” of inner city schools. Instead, questions must be asked concerning why suburban schools are not labelled in the same manner that inner city and urban schools are. What role might issues of race, social class, and geography play in why middle-class schools are always seen in relation to what is “good”, at the expense of the inner city school which is often read in relation to what is “bad”?

**Participant Reliance on Deficit Frameworks of Inner City Communities**

The data revealed that for some participants, inner city schooling ideologies were steeped in a deficit framework that cast inner city schools as non-academic spaces with students who are not interested in learning. Researchers in the field of urban teacher education (Daniel, 2010; Groulx. 2001, James-Wilson, 2007) have cited this deficit framework. James-Wilson (2007) and Weiner (1993) explained that early cultural deficit models located problems with poor and minority children and dysfunctional families. Terms such as “ghetto schools” and “dysfunctional families” were used to describe such students. These terms worked to pathologize inner city students, schools and communities using descriptors such as “at risk” with respect to both their status and their potential (p. 24). Yet, these terms are still in use today. This is a clear indication of a discursive practice that works to construct low-income and minority students in particular ways. As an exercise in power,
this portrait works to build the foundation for how such students are approached today. While the narratives about inner city schools, students, parents, and teachers thrive on their own, together they create a grand narrative about inner city schools as non-academic space where education is not the priority. Because education is not the priority, issues of pedagogy need not be problematized. Altogether, these ideologies and narratives create the accumulative affect that casts the inner city school as a “problem.”

**Participant Use of Hegemonic and Counter Hegemonic Narratives**

Participant narratives surrounding inner city schooling were complex. In different parts of any one narrative, a participant such as Earl demonstrated hegemonic understandings of inner city schooling that were deeply entrenched in deficit models of inner city communities. At the same time, Earl was able to articulate that he did not know why he felt the way that he did, suggesting that he may have been aware that his beliefs reflected wider societal beliefs about inner city schooling. While, on the one hand, some individual narratives were hegemonic, at other times, the same individual articulated counter-narratives. Hegemonic narratives often mirrored the discourse that circulates within our wider culture about inner city schooling. Counter narratives often indicated that the behaviour of inner city students cannot be understood without also paying attention to the attitudes and behaviours of inner city teachers. The data revealed that no one participant demonstrated either complete hegemonic or counter hegemonic understandings in a clear cut fashion. Instead, narratives revealed complexity of understanding that did not remain constant, but shifted based on the questions being asked, a participant’s familiarity with the topic, and a participant’s experiences with having to think through and articulate meanings that are attached to difference.
Research as Transformation

The interview process itself influenced the conceptual frames that participants applied to their potential work in schools that serve low-income and minority students. Earl, for example, explained that he was pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about inner city schooling, since he found that formal opportunities to speak about issues of diversity were rare. Bredz explained, “I guess this study has made me realize that I’m not the only one who feels the way that I felt as someone who witnessed an inner city school.” When I asked Earl to share how the interview affected his views about inner city schooling he shared:

Anita: Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Earl: Quite a few things. Again, just the first thing, when we talked about that distinction between Canadian inner-city schools versus an inner-city schools. And also that whole definition about geographic versus socioeconomic. There are schools out there that have an impoverished population but would not be considered inner-city cause this word inner-city, cause of the fact that we’re saying ‘city’. And just looking at it from the multiple lenses and specifically identifying and thinking about gender. And I never even thought about those gender roles. So that was interesting.

I am suggesting then that the interview process itself created an opportunity for participants to question themselves further about an aspect of schooling in Canada that was not formally take up in classroom spaces in the TEP that certified them to teach. The process of being asked questions about their teaching in such contexts enabled participants to think through not only what they know about inner city schools, but how they came to that knowledge. It also highlighted gaps in their knowledge. Their participation in the focus group sessions with their colleagues also provided opportunities for their ideas and ways of knowing to be challenged amongst their peers. For example, during focus group, Madison openly spoke about the marginalization of First Nations/Aboriginal people in Canada. For some participants, this was the first opportunity that they were provided with to listen to the lived experiences of a member of the First Nations/Aboriginal community.
The Spatial Mappings of Inner City Schools in Canada

The complexity surrounding individual narratives revealed a sense in which conceptions about inner city schooling were tied to geography. Hegemonic constructions of the inner city school conceived of this space as:

- dangerous space due to its location in communities of disrepute,
- non-academic space where students are “out of control” and are not interested in learning,
- a wasteland to which ineffective teachers are sent and which hires new teachers who cannot find work elsewhere,
- male space that requires hegemonic masculinity to be performed in order to control out of control students; in the process, the female body is rendered out of place in this dangerous space
- racialized space due to its immigrant and “diverse” student attendance
- impoverished spaces that deny middle-class respectability for White, female teachers
- carceral space: Canadians inner city school were read as safer spaces than U.S. inner city, given the prevalence of guns in U.S. society; U.S. schools were read as carceral space due to popular media images of inner city schools as jail-like, with metal detector and turn-stalls as experienced by one participant

Using a raced and gendered lens, the data revealed that the Canadian inner city school was often considered to be located in urban spaces, even when the definition of inner city schools suggested that such schools did not have to be confined to a particular geographic region. Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver were cited as cites where Canadian
inner city schools are most likely located. These cities are home to the largest population of racialized Canadians and new immigrants to Canada. Individual participants expressed surprise that the inner city school was located in Canada, in small Canadian cities, and in all White neighbourhoods. This finding reveals a sense in which poverty is mapped onto Other countries, large cities, and racialized communities.

Race, Gender and the Inner City School

Participants articulated race in individual terms instead of using broader systemic analyses. This confirms research by McIntyre (1997), and in Canada, early work by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996), and Schick and St. Denis (2003). Madison consistently reflected an understanding of the systemic aspects of oppression and was best able to articulate the impact that systemic racism had on First Nations/Aboriginal peoples. Individual participants’ inability to articulate notions of race beyond an individual level is directly linked to their lack of exposure to theories of race and their intersection with social class and gender, among other identity positions. Most participants identified the predominantly White teaching workforce in Canada as a race-based issue; however, this was often expressed as factual information and most participants did not express that this was problematic in any way.

Field placements in predominantly White schools meant that for some participants, issues of race were absent from their field placement sites. Race was conceptualized only as an issue in schools with racialized students and/or teachers. Participants did not articulate their sense that Whiteness is a racial standpoint or category. For some participants, discussion about race was made more uncomfortable because of my racial identity as a Black female. However, when I analyzed participants’ narratives, the data revealed that race
informed much of their thinking, even though race often took the form of coded terms (Li, 2005) that stood for race without an explicit naming of race.

Overall, participants seemed more comfortable speaking about issues of gender than issues of race, which confirms research in Canada by Daniel (2009). Individual narratives revealed that issues of gender most often involved discussions about a gender imbalance in elementary teaching with a predominance of female teachers at the elementary level and male teachers at the secondary level. Gender was often articulated with respect to the need for male teachers as role models for inner city students. Gender was also used to discuss a reading of male teachers as being better able to manage inner city students. Analysis of the data revealed that when the inner city school is read as gendered text, it becomes a space where hegemonic masculinity is expected. This works to render women in inner city schools out of place. This rendering of the inner city school as a forbidden space for women relies on constructs of the inner city school as a dangerous space from which women need to be protected.

The narratives about gender raise important questions: (a) to what extent are women safe in large cities, given that cities are seen as male space (Mitchell, 2000), (b) to what extent does the location of the inner city school, if it is located in a large metropolitan area, impact the desire of women teachers to enter spaces that might be read as a threat to their safety, and (c) to what extent might female desire to teach in inner city schools be hampered by the portrait of the inner city school as a space where order and control needs to be exercised before a teacher can teach there? These questions inform the extent to which female teachers may write themselves out of inner city schools.
Critical Knowledge: A Marginal Pedagogy

One challenge to the use of a critical framework in teacher education is its tendency to be relegated to the margins of TEPs. It is well known that the York University and OISE/University of Toronto programs use a critical transformative framework that relies heavily on links within communities where pre-service teachers learn to teach. This marginalization is illustrated not only by the deeming of critical courses as elective and optional, but also by the lack of integration of these issues across the teacher education curriculum. Few teacher educators are well versed in teaching using a critical framework. This is due to their own lack of experience with and knowledge of difference (Obidah & Howard, 2005) and their similar demographic to pre-service teachers (Kyles & Olafson, 2008). Obidah and Howard (2005) indicated that with respect to issues of race, for example, teacher educators often avoid engaging in discussions of such issues:

As such, teacher educators’ avoidance of discussions about racial differences between teachers and students renders student teachers helpless in addressing the major dilemmas and fears that are often held by teachers who are of a different race than their students. (Obidah & Howard, 2005, p. 250)

Teacher educators play an important role in the processes by which critical issues are deemed important and necessary for pre-service teacher learning. Lund (1998), Ahlquist (1991), and Ladson-Billings (1999) suggested that critical courses are often conceived of as add-ons or extras to teacher education curriculum, as seen in this research by the addition of a lecture on inner city schooling on the final day of the program. This practice works to delegitimize critical knowledge and communicates to the wider teaching community that critical courses do not contain the required knowledge that all pre-service teachers must know.

Levine-Rasky (1998) argued that the dominant discourse inherent in Canadian TEPs fails to problematize issues of race, gender, and social class and instead, subscribes to “sanguine diversity”: 
The discourse of Faculties of Education -- characteristic of dominant discourse in general--often deflects consideration of issues of social class, inequity, race, and racism by either presenting “Europeanisms” as universal or by avoiding the complexities of racialization by reducing the issue to a formula of positive role models or some version of sanguine diversity. (Levine-Rasky, 1998, p. 104)

This negation of issues of race means that when such issues are presented, they are presented in ways that fail to address the systemic aspects of social inequality and its impact on the schooling experiences of marginalized students. While Groulx (2001) indicated that it is crucial for critical education courses to be integrated across the curriculum, she warned that failure to fully integrate critical courses across the curriculum might result in pre-service teachers viewing these issues as “another course to pass” rather than being central to their understanding of their work as future educators (p. 63).

Ahlquist (1991) and Cochran-Smith (2004) wrote that moving critical courses from the margins to the centre of TEPs will expose all pre-service teachers to marginalization as it occurs in the everyday relations of schooling. Specific recommendations to Canadian TEPs by Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2001) included discussing the history of racialized groups in Canada. This, they argued, was integral in order to correct the popular belief that personal and institutional racism began with the post-World War II immigration of peoples from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America to Canada. Further suggestions by the researchers included utilizing the experiences of racialized minorities to convey to pre-service teachers the impact that racial oppression has on their lives today. A final suggestion includes integrating pre-service teachers’ racial identities in learning to teach.

Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2001) emphasized that teacher education must engage its candidates in a critical analysis of their own racial identities and their potential impact on the teaching-learning process in multiracial classrooms (p. 47). Teacher education programs, if
they are to responsibly prepare pre-service teachers for a wide range of teaching experiences, can no longer relegate critical discourse to the fringes of their programs.

Teacher education programs that fail to problematize critical pedagogy as a mandatory component of the curriculum affect the ability of teachers to be effective in all schools (Sleeter, 2001). Courses that examine issues of social inequality and the political tendencies of education are positioned as knowledge that pre-service teachers can afford not to know. The rendering of critical pedagogy as knowledge that is not mandatory invites pre-service teachers into conceiving of critical issues in education as knowledge that is not required, superfluous, extra, and “add on.” It can be regarded as take-it-or-leave-it knowledge. In the process of illegitimating critical pedagogies, teacher education programs, through the hidden curriculum (Apple 1993), send powerful, but misguided messages to pre-service teachers about the makeup of Ontario classrooms. Such teachers come to understand not only what is valued in teaching, but also who is valued.

These programs send powerful messages about which students are to be valued, which issues they must be cognizant of, and which issues they can easily disregard or ignore with little consequence to their becoming certified to teach. It is unethical for TEPs to suggest that critical issues in education may or may not be a factor in the work of teachers, especially when in some geographical areas in the Toronto area, minorities actually constitute the majority of students in schools (Kobayashi in conversation). Because teachers often move from one geographic area to another in order to attend TEPs or to accept teaching positions, it is crucial for pre-service teachers to be educated in such a way that they can adapt their conceptual knowledge to different circumstances and to different school settings. This would require the curriculum of the TEP to be structured in such a way that critical courses become mandatory and central to the program itself.
The theoretical grounding in such a program would illustrate that issues of race, gender, and social class, among others, are central to all areas of the curriculum, such as literacy, numeracy, and assessment. Such a program would ensure that teacher educators with a scholarly record of research on these issues, would work collaboratively with their colleagues to integrate these issues across the curriculum. Such integration would equip pre-service teachers with the theoretical grounding they require. In this way, pre-service teachers would be provided with course work, along with field placements, that would foster understanding and knowledge of marginalized communities, instead of stereotyping and fear.

**TDSB’s ‘Model Schools for Inner Cities’ Initiative**

The “Model Schools” initiative has received international attention for the ways in which the Board is currently prioritizing the learning needs of low income and minority students and the professional development needs of teachers who work in inner city teachers. This attention is significant because the discursive practices surrounding inner city schooling suggest that financial resources are rarely allocated to the needs of schools in low-income neighbourhoods. The TDSB (2010) reports that a key philosophy of the Model Schools initiative is that the achievement gap of “high needs” schools can be closed if:

- resources are provided to reduce the achievement gap in order to level the play field,
- innovative and intensive strategies are implemented,
- research and review processes are provided to monitor progress and to make changes where necessary,
- adequate time is provided for students and schools to demonstrate progress, and
leadership is open, elaborate, and forward thinking.

While the initiative is only in its infancy and the TDSB reports that notable gains have been made in student learning. However, since the start of the program in 2005, reports from the TDSB rarely problematize how teaching in an inner city school differently impacts new versus experienced teachers. Further, reports of the program fail to problematize the role of teachers in low income and minority schools as an important factor in the program’s implementation.

Reconceptualizing the Term “Inner City” for a Canadian Context

In this section, I raise the argument posted by McGaskell (2008) that the term “inner city” school might not be appropriate for a Canadian context, based on the arguments raised in this dissertation about the key differences between inner city schools in the U.S. and Canada. Participants in this study were unfamiliar with the term inner city and required a specific definition of it before they could speak to what it meant for them. Overall, the term did not resonate with most participants. The definition of the term, as involving a large percentage of students living in poverty, created clarity around the term. However, in several instances, participants used a geographical definition of the inner city school, even when it was established that the school did not have to be confined to a geographic definition. Because of this finding, I take up McGaskell’s (2008) assertion that the term “inner city” fails to reflect the Canadian educational landscape.

I ask whether it is possible to conceptualize a new term to describe low-income students, even though I recognize that language is always problematic. How might a change in the term impact the discursive practices that inform it? In a focus group discussion, I raised the question about the appropriateness of the term inner city for Canadian schools. I
asked participants to discuss their feelings concerning its use in relation to schools. Audrey indicated that for her, the term inner city is similar to the term at risk, which works to label and stigmatize low-income students. Madison explained that the use of the term by the TDSB was historically and still today, was intended to identify schools that required additional funding in low-income areas. Tara added that perhaps, the term “economically disadvantaged” might be a more useful term. However, Tristan argued that to use a term which openly speaks to the income level of the homes from which students emerge, negatively focuses on that aspect of their identity:

Tristan: The irony of, if you declared the school economically disadvantaged, maybe that’s the only single feature, maybe the marks [student grades] are the same [as students in other schools], maybe the success rates are the same, maybe whatever and however you define it, may or may not have a direct relationship to what actually goes on there.

The participants were trying to theorize that language is partial and is often an imperfect way to capture the nuances of any given construct.

In response to their comments, once the focus group had ended, I attempted to create new terms to describe low-income students in Canada. I tried on the term “priority schools” for size, a term I heard repeated on the evening news where inner city communities are now labelled priority communities. I wrote down the term “investment schools” only to realize that this term has a business or finance tone that fails to convey my meaning. Because each term that I created masked the fact that the students are living in poverty, I began to wonder if a solution was even possible. The TDSB has labelled inner city schools in which they are currently investing as “model” schools. I like the term. It like that the term “model” speaks to a sense in which other schools should strive. I realize that there are few instances in the Canadian context we are invited to “be like” and inner city school. I like the term
because it challenges “common sense” understandings of inner city schools. Because of that challenging, I accept the term, for now.

**Linking Teacher Education Accreditation in Ontario to Critical Pedagogy**

Elsewhere, (Jack-Davies, 2007) I argued that in order for all TEPs in the province of Ontario, and not simply the three programs at York, OISE/U of T, and the University of Windsor, to make critical knowledge a central aspect of their curriculum, we must take a serious and critical look at how TEPs in the province gain accreditation status. Teacher education accreditation policy must specifically outline criteria to which each TEP must adhere, when such programs are reviewed or when new programs are being created. At the present time, *Regulation 347-02*, as outlined by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT, 1996), sets the criteria for how programs gain accreditation. Now, this policy fails to specifically mention curriculum that addresses issues of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, and so on. This absence of discussion of the importance of critical knowledge at the policy level represents a systemic issue that might explain why critical pedagogy is often offered as elective courses in TEPs. The optional status of critical courses means that pre-service teachers can ignore knowledge they find difficult with respect to their own identities as raced, classed, and so on. The status of critical knowledge in TEPs will remain marginal until a concerted effort is made to place critical knowledge on the map of program accreditation. I outline program accreditation criteria below in its entirety. I paraphrased each item below for clarity.
Requirements for program accreditation: Ontario.

According to the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* (1996), pre-service TEPs, called Faculties of Education, in the province of Ontario became accredited when they satisfied all the requirements of *Regulation 347-02*. An accreditation committee has the task of reviewing all TEPs that apply for accreditation. Membership on this committee is comprised of members of the OCT’s council, members of the teaching profession, experts in teacher education, and a representative from the institution applying for accreditation. Under *Regulation 347-02* of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, Requirements for Accreditation*, section 9, subsection 1 contains the following requirements for a professional education program:

a) the program provider is a permitted institution,
b) the program’s conceptual framework is clear,
c) the program reflects principles of current teacher education research, integrates teacher education theory and practice, and reflects the values as outlined in the documents entitled *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession/Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*,
d) the curriculum is current, reflects the Ontario curriculum, current teacher education research, and represents a wide knowledge base,
d) theory, method, and foundation courses are included in course content,
e) the format and structure of the program is appropriate for course content,
e) student assessments are conducted on a consistent basis,
f) the program includes a practicum component that satisfies the additional requirements of *Subsection 2*,
g) program completion is dependent upon the successful completion of the practicum,
h) teaching-methods courses corresponded with the appropriate division,
i) theory and foundation courses include courses on human development and learning, educational legislation, and government policies,
j) teaching faculty members are appropriately qualified with experience in the field of education,
k) internal student records are maintained;
i) the program is committed to ongoing improvement and quality assurance, and
j) the program consists of a Teacher Education Advisory Committee or a similar committee that advises or liaises with the program.
Equity issues are absent from the accreditation policy.

While a careful reading of the policy specifies that TEPs must use current research that covers a wide knowledge base, the policy fails to specifically outline the need for TEPs to critically address issues of equity in relation to issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, and religion, and so on. Teacher education programs in the province must adhere to each of the items listed above in order to be granted accredited status. The lack of inclusion of educational equity within the policy itself means that relegation of equity issues falls to the individual TEPs to consider as important. The lack of equity provisions in the policy enables TEPs to choose whether or not they will address equity issues. If such a program fails to examine equity issues, there is no consequence to the program’s ability to gain and regain accreditation status. This absence works to reinforce the notion that critical pedagogy and equity approaches have not yet reached the status of required knowledge in the province.

In the United States, Ladson-Billings (1999) wrote that even when multicultural education policy existed to ensure compliance by TEPs, multicultural teacher education (MTE) was rarely made part of the major teacher certification programs. In 1990, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002) revised its multicultural teacher education standards and moved from an isolated approach to one that was more integrated. The new standards outlined provisions for professional studies, field-based and clinical experiences, student admissions, and faculty qualifications and assignments. Under this new standard, only eight percent (8%) of the first 59 TEPs that sought accreditation satisfied the requirements in all areas. The NCATE (2002) example demonstrates that educational equity provisions must be added to OCT accreditation policy before all programs will be motivated to pay serious attention to their practices.
The absence of equity provisions reveals that several steps must be taken in order to remedy this situation. First, teacher education policy must ensure that all TEPs include mandatory critical curriculum courses. The content of such courses could be integrated into courses offered in other areas of the curriculum, such that pre-service teachers are able to see how these issues intersect and undercut all areas of schooling. These standards could mirror those of the NCATE’s (2002) example above, or those of other programs with demonstrated success in the field of teacher education in Canada and globally. Second, measures of accountability for failure to comply with educational equity policies must be clearly stated. These measures must be enforced by consequences that directly impact the ability of non-complying TEPs to gain accreditation or to renew their status.

Third, educational equity policies must be drafted with the assistance of qualified teacher educators with experience and expertise in the area of critical pedagogy. Teacher practitioners, parents, and students who reflect the racial, cultural, and social class diversity must be invited to participate in this dialogue. This will ensure that a multitude of voices are heard and that the policies reflect the needs and desires of all education stakeholders. In addition to this, subcommittees made up of curriculum developers, teacher educators, and teacher practitioners should work to assist with the drafting of such policies.

Fourth, educational equity standards must ensure that a critical approach is used in the courses that address issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and so on. A critical approach might help to ensure that pre-service teacher beliefs and their corresponding practices will be addressed. Further, the larger economic, political, and social forces that inform inequities in education will be competently analyzed. Cochran-Smith (2004) explained that when she critically reflected on her own practice as a teacher educator and read teaching as racial text, it became clear what was left out, veiled, and implied by being unmarked (p. 8).
Likewise, Kincheloe (2004) asserted that the questions that are asked about teacher education directly impacted its form:

The questions we ask about teacher education drive the form it takes. The more we know about different forms of knowledge and about the relationship between power and knowledge, the more we realize that the questions we ask validate specific ways of thinking about teacher education while invalidating others. (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 102)

The absence of policy that outlines the role that educational equity must play in the teacher education curriculum means that it is possible for large numbers of new teachers to earn teaching degrees without ever having been exposed to critical discourse. The seven participants in this study provide evidence of this. Pre-service teachers who are unable to enrol in elective courses that address equity issues in education are severely disadvantaged concerning their ability to work with marginalized students. Ultimately, the conditions must be created in TEPs where a pre-service teacher would be unable to graduate from a certified TEP in the province of Ontario without enrolling and passing mandatory courses that specifically address issues of race, gender, social class, and so on. This can be achieved only through an integrated effort between academic course content, field placements, and a concerted effort made by teacher educators from diverse epistemological perspectives.

**Recommendations to Teacher Education Programs**

1. Create program entrance criteria such that pre-service teachers must demonstrate a knowledge of and commitment to issues of equity as it relates to race, gender, social class, and so on. Such criteria could be presented in the form of an essay that applicants must compose, where they speak to their demonstrated commitment to equity issues.
2. Include course content on inner city schools as a mandatory aspect of the teacher education curriculum.

3. Ensure that pre-service teachers are placed in at least one inner city school during their field placements; this field placement must be accompanied by teacher educators with knowledge about inner city schooling; such teacher educators should meet with pre-service teachers for regularly scheduled appointments to discuss teaching in this context.

4. Hire teacher educators with a scholarly record of critical pedagogy as they relate to schooling. Pay specific attention to the impact of issues of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and so on, on the schooling experiences of students.

5. Provide pre-service teachers with concrete evidence concerning marginalized students’ disengagement from schools. This might include data on student drop-out rates, government reports on the experiences of marginalized students, data on the effects of streaming and the impact of this practice on the future learning of students; ensure that assessment courses include critical components that discuss the impact of large scale assessment on low-income, racialized, and immigrant students.

6. Include at least two mandatory, “stand alone” courses that specifically address issues of race social class in Canada. Such courses might also examine the history of race relations in Canada (Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001) and theory on social inequality (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996).

7. Create pedagogical spaces whereby pre-service teachers can work though the meaning of their own racialized identities (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003; Solomon...
& Rezai-Rashti, 2001). This should take place in small group seminars as opposed to large lecture type courses.

**Recommendations to the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Ministry of Education**

1. Add equity criteria to *Regulation 349-02* (OCT) such that TEPs cannot become certified or cannot renew their current certification without offering mandatory curriculum courses that are critical.

2. Ensure that criteria is included in TEP review policies to ensure that TEP administrators will work toward creating more equitable spaces through: (a) student recruitment, (b) faculty recruitment, and (c) coursework.

3. Provide opportunities in *Regulation 349-02* for programs to state the manner in which they are working toward making their programs more equitable spaces.

**Recommendations to Ontario Boards of Education**

1. Review all school board polices concerning new teacher hires to identified inner city schools.

2. Require pre-service teachers in the hiring stages of school board employment to provide proof of the successful passing of critical courses that address one of the following: (a) race, (b) social class/social inequality, and (c) gender, and so on.

3. Require pre-service teachers in the hiring stages of school board employment to provide proof of volunteer work with marginalized communities.
4. Provide mandatory professional development for all teachers currently working in inner city schools on an annual basis or as frequently as is needed by teachers.
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**Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 61, 1-21.**


Hi, my name is Anita Jack-Davies and I am a doctoral student here at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. I am seeking teacher candidates (TCs) for a study that examines TCs beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge about ‘inner city’ schooling in Canada. The title of the research is *The loudest silence: A critical examination of teacher candidates’ beliefs about ‘inner city’ schooling.* You must be a current TC enrolled in the one year, pre-service, teacher education program at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, for the 2009-2010 academic year.

The research involves participating in one in-depth interview or a focus group discussion, each lasting 60 minutes in length, during the month of May, June, or July 2010. However, you may be invited to participate in a follow up interview if I require clarification of any of your ideas from the first interview; however, you are free to decline participation in the second interview. I would like to remind you that if you choose to take part in this important study, that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw you may request that all or part of your data be destroyed by submitting this request to me via email to Anita Jack-Davies or by articulating this request in person if you make this decision while being interviewed. You will be compensated for your time with a $20.00 cash payment per interview or focus group. You will be paid in cash at the end of each session.

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. However, you may feel uncomfortable with some questions that focus on issues of gender and race. You may worry about how others will react to what you say; however, I am interested in your candid opinions. Please be advised that you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

Further, your participation in this study will be confidential, to the extent possible. Information that you provide to me will not be repeated to anyone. If you choose to use your name, it will not appear anywhere in the data. However, we can sometimes be identified by the stories we tell. Please keep this in mind if you choose to participate. I have provided your course instructor with a brief handout explaining the facts about this research; however, I welcome your email inquiries. Thank you for your time.
Appendix B
Poster Advertisement & List-Serv Advertisement

Call for Research Participants

*TCs needed for Exciting Research!*

Are you a recent graduate of a Canadian B.Ed program (2009-2010)?

Then consider taking part in groundbreaking research!

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation that seeks your opinions about ‘inner city’ schools in Canada. You do not have to have experience teaching in ‘inner city’ schools in order to participate. The research involves participating in one 60 minute focus group sessions being held during the month of May, June, or July at an accessible location on campus or a 60 minute interview to be conducted at locations across Ontario including Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Kingston. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

You will be compensated with a $20.00 cash payment for your participation in the session of your choice. This project has been approved by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board.

If interested please contact:

**Anita Jack-Davies**

Doctoral student
Queen’s Faculty of Education
Cultural & Policy Studies
Email: 4apj@queensu.ca
Appendix C
Email to Course Instructors

Dear ________________ (Course Instructor)

My name is Anita Jack-Davies and I am a doctoral student in the area of Cultural & Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University. I am seeking your permission to speak briefly to the teachers in your course ________________________________ about my research. I am inviting them to participate in research for my doctoral dissertation. The research broadly examines teacher education and ‘inner city’ schooling. Teachers are integral to the education that students receive and your participation in this study will help to increase our understandings of how teacher candidates might be prepared to teach in ‘inner city’ schools. This study has been granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board for compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, and Queen’s policies.

I am seeking participation from ten to fifteen teacher candidates (TCs) for a study that examines TCs beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge about ‘inner city’ schooling in Canada. The title of the research is The loudest silence: A critical examination of teacher candidates’ beliefs about ‘inner city’ schooling.

The research involves participating in one in-depth interview or a focus group session lasting 60 minutes in length, during the month of May, June or July 2010. My Research Supervisor for this research is Dr. Magda Lewis. Kindly let me know if I may visit your class and when might be a good date and time.

Regards,

Anita Jack-Davies
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix D
Individual Interview Schedule

- Thank you for participating
- Do not answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable
- Do not be afraid of offending me
- Sign two copies of Consent Form
- Distribute Campus Resource Sheet

**Initial Open Ended**
- Tell me about what attracted you to teaching?
- What are your ‘teachables’?

**Intermediate Questions**

According to the Toronto District School Board (2005) ‘inner city’ schools are defined as schools with a large percentage of students living in poverty. I will be using this definition when I use the term ‘inner city’ as we move forward.

- When did you first become aware of the existence of inner city’ schools?
- When you picture the neighbourhood surrounding a Canadian ‘inner city’ school, what do you see?
- In your mind, what do you think is the difference between a Canadian versus an American inner city school?
- When you envision the inside of a Canadian ‘inner city’ school, what do you see?
- Geographically, where do you think a Canadian ‘inner city’ school might be located (town, city, province)?
- Now that you are a teacher, how would you describe ‘inner city’ students? What do they look like, how are they dressed? (This question and the probing question is meant to determine where participants fall along a continuum of hegemonic versus critical understandings of inner city students). **Probe:** How might they behave?
- With respect to classroom management, what comes to mind when you think about inner city students? **Probe:** when you think about teaching at an ‘inner city’ school, what do you think about in terms of student behaviour and classroom management?
- What comes to mind when I say the term ‘inner city’ parents? **Probe:** how do you see these parents interacting with ‘inner city’ schools?
- What do you see when you hear the term ‘inner city’ teacher?
- What does this teacher look like? (This question is meant to determine where participants fall along a continuum of hegemonic versus critical understandings of inner city teacher).

Anita: the following questions will look at issues of race and gender
- When you think about an ‘inner city’ teacher, what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s gender?
- When you think about an ‘inner city’ teacher, what comes to mind with respect to the teacher’s racial identity?
- Tell me about issues of race and ‘inner city’ schools?
- When you think about your own racial identity, what comes to mind when you think about teaching at an ‘inner city’ school?
- Tell me about issues of gender and ‘inner city’ schools?
- When you think about your own gendered identity as a male/female, what comes to mind when you think about teaching at an ‘inner city’ school?
- Looking back, what has been the main source of your knowledge about ‘inner city’ schools?
  a) media
  b) family
  c) personal experience
  d) other
- Describe how your B.Ed program examined ‘inner city’ schooling issues?
- Describe any learning about ‘inner city’ schools that took place on your practicum?
- What knowledge do you think a new teacher hired to teach at an ‘inner city’ school needs to know?
- What do you think teachers might obtain this knowledge?

**Concluding Questions**
- What was the highlight of your B.Ed year?
- What are you looking forward to as you approach your teaching career?
- What was your greatest accomplishment this past year?
- What do you hope to achieve by the end of your teacher education program?
- What advice would you give to Canadian B.Ed programs concerning ‘inner city’ schools?
- How has this interview affected your views about ‘inner city’ schools?
- Is there anything that you thought about today that may not have occurred to you before about inner city schools?
- Is there anything you would like to ask me?

☐ *Thank you for your participation*

☐ *Compensation*
Appendix E
Letter of Consent for Teacher Candidates

Faculty of Education, 511 Union Street, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7M 5R7

I agree to participate in the study entitled *The Loudest Silence: A critical examination of teacher candidates’ beliefs about ‘inner city’ schooling* directed by Anita Jack-Davies and conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University.

I have read and retained the *Letter of Information* and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I give my consent to have the interview or the focus group audiotaped.

I have read and signed one copy of the attached *Consent Form*. I have returned the signed copy and retained one copy for my records.

I understand participation in the in depth interview involves a maximum of 60 minutes and may involve a follow up interview or I understand participation in the focus group involves a maximum of 60 minutes.

I understand that only the researcher will have access to data and that participants' names will be coded to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Should I choose to withdraw, I may request that all or part of your data be destroyed by submitting this request to Anita Jack-Davies via email or by articulating this request in person to Anita, if I make this decision while being interviewed.

I understand that the researcher intends to publish the findings of this study.

I understand that a copy of each publication resulting from the research will be made available to each participant, upon request.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Anita Jack-Davies at 4apij@queensu.ca or my supervisor Dr. Magda Lewis at 613-533-6000 ext. 77277 and magda.lewis@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
Please sign one copy of this Letter of Consent and return to Anita Jack-Davies. Retain the second copy for your records.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Teacher Candidates’ name: ____________________________

(please print)

Signature of TC: ____________________________ Date: ________________

I would like to receive a copy of all publications resulting from the study: Yes__________
No ____________

If Yes, my email address is ____________________________
Appendix F
Letter of Information for Teacher Candidates

Faculty of Education, 511 Union Street, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7M 5R7

The Loudest Silence:
A critical examination of teacher candidates’ beliefs about “inner city” schooling

May 6, 2010

Dear Teacher Candidate,

You are one of a group of teacher candidates selected as a potential participant for a research study, entitled The Loudest Silence: A critical examination of teacher candidates’ beliefs about “inner city” schooling being conducted at the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University. The study was granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board for compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, and Queen’s policies.

The aim of this letter is twofold. First, it will describe the purpose and method of the research study. Second, it will request that you agree, in writing, to participate in the study. Please indicate your decision to participate in the study by signing the Consent Form before the start of the interview. The research method employed in this study requires that you participate in one 60 minute interview and a possible follow up interview, or 60 minute focus group. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon public location that guarantees that your comments will remain confidential or the focus group will take place at the Faculty of Education’s Graduate Student Facility, depending on which you choose.

Participating in the study involves you in no more risk than your normal daily activities. There are no known physical, psychological, economic or social risks associated with participation in this research. Agreement on your part to be a part of the study in no way obligates you to remain a part of the study. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you choose to withdraw you may request that all or part of your data be destroyed by submitting this request via email to Anita Jack-Davies or by articulating this request in person if you make this decision while being interviewed. Further, participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark you may receive. You will be compensated at $20.00 per interview or focus group, depending on which you choose. You will be paid in cash at the end of each session.
I intend to publish the findings of the study in professional journals and report them at conferences. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. At no time will the actual identity of the participants be disclosed. Each teacher candidate participating in the study will be assigned a code name; any reference in publications to participants or what you say at any time during the study will be to the code name only.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Anita Jack-Davies at 4apjd@queensu.ca or Dr. Magda Lewis at 613-533-6000 ext. 77277 and magda.lewis@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca. Please sign one copy of the Consent Form. Retain the second copy of each for your records.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Jack-Davies

Doctoral Candidate, Queen’s Faculty of Education
Appendix G
Focus Group One Schedule

June 26, 2010

Opening

a. Introduction to research and topic.

b. Purpose of the focus group.

c. Thank participants for their participation

d. Reminder: speaking in turns, stating name before speaking as interview is being recorded

e. Only share what feels comfortable

Choose from the following:

- What does the term ‘inner city’ mean to you personally?

- During in-depth interviews one theme that was shared amongst many participants was a sense of surprise that inner city schools exist in Canada. Can you explain why you may have been surprised?

  a. What is it about Canada that makes the existence of such schools unbelievable (national image, national myths, stories, media images etc) or what causes you to be surprised?

  b. If you were surprised by the existence of inner city schools in Kingston, can you explain what caused this sense of surprise?

- What are your thoughts about student learning at an ‘inner city’ school?

- Now that you have completed your B.Ed would you teach at an inner city school if the position was offered to you? Why or why not?

  c. If no, what might prevent you from taking a position at an inner city school?

- What are your thoughts with respect to gender and teaching at an inner city school?

- A few participants discussed the sense that their B.Ed program either failed to explore ‘inner city’ schooling issues or felt that the issue was explored ‘in passing’. Why do you think that ‘inner city’ schooling as a topic was not covered or not covered in much detail?

Thank you
Appendix H
Focus Group Two Schedule
July 19, 2010

- Introduction to research and topic.
- Purpose of group interview: The theme of today’s focus group is a discussion of Canadian identity and issues of race
- Thank participants for their participation
- Reminder: speaking in turns, stating name before speaking as interview is taped
- Only share what feels comfortable

Canadian Identity

- When you think about what it means to be Canadian, what comes to mind?
- What does being Canadian mean to you?
- How did you learn about what it means to be Canadian?
- What do you think are popular ways in which Canada or being Canadian is represented in our society?
- Recently, we hosted the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia and the Opening and Closing ceremonies was a good example of one way in which our Canadian identity was represented. What do you remember about the games with respect to Canadian identity?
- When you think about our Canadian identity, what comes to mind with respect to inner city schools? (this question is being repeated and was asked during Group Interview 1)

Race

- What does the term race mean to you?
- If you could describe what race is, what would you say?
- How have you learned about race in our life?
- How has your B.Ed program explored issues of race?
- What messages do you receive from our society about issues of race?
- Tell me about race and inner city schools?
- Tell me about race in Canada and race in the U.S.?
- Tell me about race in small cities versus large urban settings?
- A few participants suggested that issues of race changes if we live in a small town versus if we live in a large, diverse city. How are issues of race dealt with in this city?
Appendix I

Instructions for Focus Group Three
Media Analysis of *Freedom Writers*

Instructions
1. Watch each video using the link below & the film *Freedom Writers*
2. Record your observations, thoughts, & ideas with respect to the 'inner city'
3. Bring this with you to Focus Group 3.

A. Music Video: Jay Z featuring Alicia Keys - Empire State of Mind

B. Music Video: Tupac Shakur - My Block
   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE1FqiDFDbA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE1FqiDFDbA)

C. Music Video: Common - The Corner
   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mnK Nr2Tiq8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mnK Nr2Tiq8)

4. Film - *Freedom Writers*

I rented 3 copies of *Freedom Writers* from the video store and will distribute them during the 2nd Focus Group session on the 19th. For anyone who will be away, I can make arrangements to get the film to you so that you will not have to incur the cost of renting it. Please email me to let me know what will work best for you. I am very much looking forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas on these.

**Film**

- How is the ‘inner city’ portrayed (neighbourhood, community, buildings, spaces)?
- How is the 'inner city' school shown?
- How are students portrayed?
- How are parents portrayed?
- How are teachers portrayed, especially the main character?
- What is the overall message of the film?
- How are issues of race and gender shown?
Appendix J
Campus Resources for Research Participants

Queen’s Human Rights Office
A320 Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Queen's University,
613-533-6886
Advisor: Stephanie Simpson - Race & Race-Related Issues
Advisor: Jean Pfleiderer - Sexual & Gender Diversity

Queen’s Health Counselling & Disabilities Services
146 Stuart Street, Queen’s University (across from Adelaide Hall)
613-533-6000 ext. 78264.
Advisor: Dr. Arunima Khanna - Cross Cultural Advisor