# When Claiming to Teach for Social Justice is Not Enough: Majoritarian Stories of Race, Difference, and Meritocracy

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**Abstract**

To understand how dominant messages about race and effective pedagogy impact teacher beliefs and practice, this study employs critical race theory (CRT) in a case study analysis of Rebecca Rosenberg, a mid-career entrant into the teaching profession who was terminated from her first job before the end of her district's probationary period. Despite believing she was teaching for social justice, being prepared in a program oriented toward social justice, and being hired in a school with a comparable mission, Rebecca's beliefs and practices affirmed uncritical perspectives of the status quo regarding race, schooling, and social ascendance. This research underscores the substantial work to be done in preparing teachers to be reflective of the overarching cultural myths and majoritarian stories that may guide their practice.

*Keywords:* Social Justice and Equity; Critical Race Theory

Hytten and Bettez (2011) argue that as an abstract idea, it is difficult to be against social justice since "After all, we learn to pledge allegiance to a country that supposedly stands for 'liberty and justice for all'" (p. 8). Despite this general consensus around goals of social justice, many have asserted that the notion of social justice and its pedagogical operationalization are not always consistently defined across varying contexts (Kapustka, Howell, Clayton, & Thomas, 2009; Zeichner, 2006) and can "relate to a range of different practices and beliefs" (Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, & Sonu, 2010, p. 238). In fact, according to Zeichner (2006), "It is difficult to find any teacher education program in the country that doesn't claim to be doing teacher education for social justice. The difficulty is whether or not they are actually *doing* it" (p. 193). Many teachers and teacher educators can claim to be teaching for social justice despite participating in cultural and linguistic practices that perpetuate inequitable outcomes based on race, class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and ability.

Juárez, Smith, and Hayes (2008) highlight a major issue in teacher education for social justice: its whiteness. They argue:

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First and foremost, teacher education for diversity and social justice is a teacher education that is just for White people. Teacher education is a White work. The overwhelming majority of teachers, future teachers, and teacher educators are White  (Gordon, 2005). Likewise, the preparation of teachers most often takes place in historically White institutions. The whiteness of teacher education is underscored when issues of diversity, racism, and social justice are acknowledged at the margins of what teacher educators do and say as they go about the daily business of preparing teachers…Teacher education for diversity and social justice is teacher education that is about  positively  managing  White people's emotions and helping them to maintain an image of themselves as good and innocent. White people do not like or want to talk about White racism. (pp. 21–23)

The argument that social justice oriented teacher education focuses on White pre-service teachers is well documented (Johnson Lachuk & Mosley, 2011; Lowenstein, 2009). However, researchers have yet to substantially acknowledge the limitations of historically White institutions staffed with mainly White teacher educators working with predominantly White teacher candidates as they learn to teach for social justice. In this "White work," teachers and teacher educators face real challenges in crafting educational practices that are powerful enough to disrupt the inequitable status quo, particularly given how the overwhelmingly White spaces of teacher education perpetuate white privilege and white normativity.

From our perspective, pedagogy oriented toward social justice challenges traditional notions of schooling by viewing the teacher as an agent of social change who prepares students to critique dominant social structures and the myths that maintain them (Agarwal et al., 2010; Johnson, Lachuk, & Mosley, 2011; Zeichner, 2009). The social justice agenda promotes teaching that moves beyond knowledge transfer and embraces schooling as an important vehicle in the development of critically thoughtful and compassionate democratic citizens capable of examining and disrupting current inequities (Cammarota, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2009; Flores, 2007). We believe competent social justice educators affirm students' cultural differences as assets, design instruction that builds on students' experiential knowledge, and challenge societal inequities through leadership, advocacy, and organizing (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Cook-Sather, Cohen, & Alter, 2010; Zeichner, 2009). Therefore, awareness of marginalization and social justice issues "is insufficient"; teachers must feel a sense of responsibility for "transcending current norms" (Silverman, 2010, p. 294) in order to deconstruct ongoing distributions of power and privilege based on racialized hierarchies of gender, class, ability, language, and other powerful issues of oppression and marginalization.

As a group of White teacher educators, we also acknowledge a major component of our social justice work is to "move inside [our] own community and start tearing down racism where in fact does exist" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 5). We believe that decades ago, Carmichael accurately identified the cause of ongoing issues of racial inequity as being "the incapability of Whites to deal with their own problems inside their own communities" (p. 3). We believe that White teachers and White teacher educators,

individuals who gain institutional and societal power by virtue of their professions, must meaningfully grapple with racism and other issues of inequity to disrupt the social injustices occurring across our society due to the persistence of white privilege, hegemony, and normativity.

In viewing social justice teaching as a movement for substantial and radical social change, we conducted a case study of Rebecca Rosenberg,[2] a mid-career entrant into the teaching profession who was terminated from her first job just days before the end of her district's probationary period. Rebecca's beliefs and practices affirmed uncritical perspectives of the status quo regarding race, schooling, and social ascendance, despite believing she was teaching for social justice, being prepared in a program oriented toward social justice, and being hired into a school with a comparable mission. In systematically examining Rebecca's pre-service and in-service experiences, we seek to explore Rebecca's understanding of teaching for social justice and how this conceptualization impacted her career. Specifically, this research is guided by the following questions:

- How did one teacher candidate/novice (Rebecca Rosenberg) conceptualize teaching for social justice?
- How did her conception of teaching for social justice manifest itself in her teaching and in her eventual firing?
- What can pre-service teacher educators learn from Rebecca?

To answer these questions, we first provide an overview of critical race theory (CRT), the theoretical framework guiding this research. Next, we discuss our research methodology, data, and analysis. Then, we present our findings to explore Rebecca's perceptions of teaching for social justice as well as how those perceptions affected her practice and eventual firing from her teaching position. Finally, we discuss implications for teachers and teacher educators who seek to promote teaching for social justice in order to disrupt the inequities in our current practices and systems.

## Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a helpful lens through which to examine Rebecca's definition and operationalization of social justice teaching. CRT originated in the field of legal studies during the 1970s as a way of combating systemic forms of racism that continued to promote racist outcomes and inequities in the legal system despite the successes of the Civil Rights Movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Though significant progress had been made to reduce the racist state of the nation, racism persisted and largely became conceived as:

A discrete and identifiable act of "prejudice based on skin color" [which] placed virtually the entire range of everyday practices in America—social practices developed and maintained throughout the period of formal American apartheid—beyond the scope of critical examination or legal remediation. (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xv)

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In response, early CRT scholars called for the expansion of legal scholarship and activism that had contributed to the Civil Rights Movement (Crenshaw, 1988) as well as the reinterpretation of civil rights laws to unmask the systemic and institutional factors preventing the amelioration of racial inequity (Tate, 1997). The overarching tenets of CRT place race at the center of analyses and discussions; challenge meritocracy, objectivity, neutrality, and ahistoricism; emphasize experiential knowledge (particularly of People of Color); and support interdisciplinality (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993).

The central goal of CRT is to study and transform the relationships between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Yosso and Solórzano (2005) assert that CRT strives to challenge dominant ideologies that perpetuate inequities at the intersections of race, class, gender, language, ability, and heteronormativity as well as substantially promote social justice and equity. In order to accomplish this, CRT scholars have developed several methodological and conceptual tools.

One such conceptual tool is the notion of "interest convergence." Bell (1980) asserts, "The interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites" (p. 523). This is a powerful conceptual tool, especially when we consider the issues of White teacher education and the challenges of preparing White teachers to teach for social justice (Juárez et al., 2008) in our "nice" field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Essentially, the interest convergence principle demonstrates how difficult it is to destroy racial hierarchies by positing that the implementation of policies and practices that support Communities of Color will only be instituted if they also serve Whites' interests. Thus, interest convergence may help explain why actualizing teacher education for social justice is so challenging given that many teacher education policies and practices are based on perpetuating white privilege rather than disrupting it (Juárez et al., 2008; Milner, 2008; Sleeter, 2009).

CRT scholar Milner (2008) discussed interest convergence in teacher education and describes one of the major challenges of racial progress: Whites being unwilling to give up power and privilege for the overall promotion of equity and social justice. He states, "Change is often *purposefully* and *skillfully* slow and at the will and design of those in power" (p. 334). This issue of power is what interest convergence illuminates, particularly in the predominantly White world of teachers and teacher education where "the sacrifice necessary for real social change to take place is sometimes too painful or inconceivable" (p. 334). Therefore, Matias (in press) argues that teachers and teacher educators need to be willing to "share the burden" of racism and other oppressive systems through an emotional investment and willingness to relinquish power and privilege for the purpose of actual racial and social progress.

Interest convergence can help illuminate the specific ways in which systematic power remains unchallenged. Specifically, the interest convergence principle can lead to an examination of how dominant group members justify the perpetuation of their dominance. One such tool is the use of dominant cultural narratives, or what CRT terms "majoritarian stories" (Love, 2004). Contemporary majoritarian stories work as barriers to social justice and equity by de-emphasizing the centrality of race and racism in social institutions and promoting deficit ideologies that blame social and educational inequities on non-dominant populations (Love, 2004; Mitchell, 2012a, 2012b; Solórzano & Yosso,

2001, 2002a, 2002b). Gillborn (2005) argues that majoritarian stories often promote an ahistorical perspective that ignores existing structural and historical issues of domination and power. An example of an ahistorical majoritarian story in teacher education is its tendency to emphasize technicism. Many teachers and teacher educators seek technical, intervention-based solutions to issues like learning English and overcoming the "achievement gap," which are conceived of as school-based problems. These technical solutions are often ineffective on their own, yet they tend to dominate teacher preparation curriculum. Overall, a purely technicist approach, or what Bartolomé (1994) called a "methods fetish," will never help teachers and schools to overcome and overturn the years of educational inequity and debt this country owes to non-dominant student populations (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

In addition to these conceptual tools developed by CRT scholars, a powerful method CRT scholars use to challenge majoritarian stories is counter-storytelling. Particularly, CRT scholars emphasize the experiences and perspectives of historically oppressed and marginalized groups as counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). Leaving the important work of racial counter-storytelling to People of Color, Mitchell (2012b) identified four common majoritarian stories often communicated in educational settings in the United States. The following three majoritarian stories are relevant to this study: *there is no story about race*, *difference is deficit*, and *meritocracy is appropriate*.

The first majoritarian story, which posits that there is no story about race, is founded upon the hegemonic colorblind ideology of "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) or "post-racialism" (Cho, 2009) where racism is considered to have been successfully eradicated by the Civil Rights Movement. This narrative views racism mainly as manifested in overt acts of prejudice and violence while neglecting to acknowledge systemic racism, white privilege, and white normativity that continually affect outcomes in schooling today (Johnson, Lachuk, & Mosley, 2011).

The second majoritarian story is the deficit-laden story, which claims that students who vary from the White, monolingual English-speaking, middle-class, Judeo-Christian, able-bodied, heterosexual norm are problems to be solved rather than students with much to contribute to both learning environments and our broader democratic society (Mitchell, 2012b). Meritocracy, the focus of the third majoritarian story, is a cultural concept that is often embraced and invoked in American tales of individual success to perpetuate the notion that hard work and perseverance alone determine one's personal achievements. However, the concept of meritocracy that promotes "fairness" and "equality" is problematic in a schooling system plagued with inequitable resource distribution and a curriculum that privileges certain knowledge, perspectives, and ways of being. Thus, the majoritarian story of meritocracy plays a substantial role in current schooling and educational practices, but overlooks histories of educational inequity and the "educational debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006) incurred toward Students of Color over the course of our country's history. These three stories provided a helpful analytical framework to investigate the case of Rebecca Rosenberg and her struggles to teach for social justice as well as remain in the teaching profession.

**Research Design**

This study draws on methods and data from the Qualitative Case Studies project[3] (QCS), a multi-site, longitudinal, cross-case study of teacher learning that traces the experiences of 22 teachers. Researchers followed these teachers from the beginning of their one-year Master's teacher preparation program at a mid-sized private university in the Northeast. They continued following novice teachers through their third or fourth year of teaching or until discontinuation of the program or exit from teaching. The QCS project represents a multi-participant case study (Stake, 2006). The larger QCS study addressed a wide array of questions about teaching and how people learn to teach during the early years of their career. Such topics included the role of pre-service preparation, the ways prior experience and entry characteristics interact with learning opportunities, how teachers' values and beliefs evolve over time, how they construct and interpret practice in varying conditions and contexts, what the learning outcomes are for their students and themselves, and what career decisions they make. Explicitly woven through the interview and observation protocols were questions targeting the experience and perceptions of the teacher candidates and program graduates to gauge their conceptions and practices around teaching for social justice.

Social justice is a critical component of the teacher education program investigated by the QCS project. Specifically, faculty and students are, according to the mission of the university, encouraged to "challenge inequities in the social order and work to establish a more just society." Prospective teachers are required to take courses exploring the social context of education and are given opportunities to work with diverse learners and students with disabilities. Moreover, their courses are intended to foster an inquiry stance as teachers for social justice. The focus of these courses is in developing a critical stance to historical and contemporary issues of social justice in education with the goal of graduating teacher candidates who act as advocates and initiators of change in schools and society. Additionally, issues of social justice are embedded in courses through the thoughtful and systematic use of assignments and practicum opportunities. For example, all students develop case studies on multilingual learners, write reflective essays on their own understanding and experiences of racial identity, and develop inquiry projects that explicitly examine school and social contexts. Furthermore, some teacher candidates, including the subject of this case study, participate in a year-long intensive urban teaching program. Along with traditional methods and foundational courses, students participating in the urban teaching program take courses designed to prepare them for teaching in urban settings and work with experienced mentor teachers in two practicum experiences in urban schools.

While it is not within the scope of our research to investigate the teacher preparation program Rebecca attended for its alignment with the characteristics of CRT, it is worth noting that previous research on this program has pointed to its misalignment with CRT principles, which is worthy of further exploration and potential program improvement

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(Mitchell, 2010). This challenging "White work" (Juárez et al., 2008) in a predominantly White institution with mainly White teacher educators and mostly White teacher candidates appears to be an issue even in this nationally recognized teacher education program that sincerely strives to prepare teachers to teach for social justice.

One QCS participant, Rebecca Rosenberg, was selected as our focal case as she embodied much of what the teacher education program sought to achieve in preparing teachers to teach for social justice, yet her teaching practice ultimately resulted in termination of her first teaching position after just 90 days. Case study approaches are appropriate "when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1989, p. 13). Given that we sought to examine how Rebecca viewed social justice and its implications for teaching in various school settings, this methodology is ideal. In addition, the single case study approach highlights three critical features as outlined by Merriam (1998). First, the case is particularistic, meaning that it is focused on a bounded phenomenon that we systematically examine through the theoretical frame of CRT and majoritarian stories. Here, the case of Rebecca Rosenberg provides the experience of a participant who fails in her profession though she exceeds standards for being a highly qualified teacher, is aware of and concerned with issues of social justice in education, and successfully completes a program dedicated to preparing teachers to be advocates for social justice. Second, utilizing "thick description" obtained from our longitudinal, qualitative examination of Rebecca's teaching career, the end product of this case is a rich, complex account. The data are used to explore multiple and interrelated variables, including contextual factors, participant perspective, and reports from school personnel. Third, the choice of a single case is appropriate for the questions posed in the study, which focus on meaning making; the case is heuristic, intended to extend and illuminate Rebecca's understanding of the phenomenon.

In presenting the case of Rebecca Rosenberg, this study offers potential to uncover factors previously disregarded in the preparation of teachers acting as social justice advocates. While single descriptive case studies are frequently criticized for their inability to show causative relationships or to generate theory, we argue that they hold value in suggesting alternative research threads (Stake, 2006) and contribute to a cumulative body of knowledge on the phenomenon through single "deviant cases" (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 81). This study specifically offers critical insight for teachers and teacher educators seeking to teach for social justice.

**Data Collection**

Members of the QCS research team collected data sources and stored them in a linked electronic data system that enables retrieval of coded, de-identified data and supporting documents. Table 1 provides a description of the data analyzed for this study.

Table 1
*Data Sources*

| Data Source | Description | Totals |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Teacher Candidate Interviews | 60–90 minute interviews with Rebecca | 7 |
| Teacher Candidate Observations | 75–120 minute observations of Rebecca's teaching, including copies of assessment tasks and pupil work associated with each observation. One observation was completed during her employment as a teacher. | 6 |
| Teacher Inquiry Project and Other Teacher Education Coursework | Rebecca's Capstone Inquiry Project, plus 3 additional coursework projects and 6 lesson plans/units created for teacher education course assignments. | 10 |
| Auxiliary Interviews | 15–40 minute interviews conducted in spring of Rebecca's pre-service year with her cooperating teacher and university supervisor. One interview with the principal was conducted following release from school. | 3 |
| Classroom Assessment Tasks/Samples of Pupil Work | Assessment tasks and samples of pupil work from pre-service teaching. | ~35 |
| Field notes | ~10 pages of field notes recorded during data collection. These notes focused on conversations that were not part of the formal data collection, researcher impressions from participating in various data collection activities, and a timeline to keep track of when events happened, particularly when Rebecca was dismissed. | |

**Data Analysis**

Informed by Hill and her colleagues (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Hess, & Ladany, 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), the QCS team utilized a "consensual" approach to qualitative analysis and developed coding schemes to be applied across all cases. The data for this case were obtained from the larger QCS study by extracting Rebecca's data coded as "social justice." We then utilized a pre-existing coding scheme developed around teacher candidate perceptions of social justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Cochran-Smith and colleagues categorized their codes according to four main themes:

pupil learning, relationships and respect, teacher as activist, and recognizing inequities. Within each of these four broader themes, Cochran-Smith and colleagues generated and clearly defined individual codes. It is worth noting, that the Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) codes utilized in our study were generated in research from the larger QCS study. We used these codes regarding teacher candidate perceptions of social justice to code Rebecca's data for both the presence and absence of themes to ascertain Rebecca's understanding and perceptions around teaching for social justice.

Additionally, we completed a content analysis of Rebecca's data, using the analytical framework of the majoritarian stories in education described above (Mitchell, 2012b). Specifically, we analyzed all of Rebecca's data for the presence and absence of majoritarian stories. In analyzing data, we employed the constant comparative method whereby team members collectively identified and modified key concepts and themes over time through multiple readings of the data by multiple persons (Charmaz, 2000). This process required frequent discussion regarding the coherence between larger explanations and the particular contexts and conditions of the individual case. Thus, it was an iterative process that was repeated multiple times until it was integrated with the two coding frameworks described above (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2012b).

## Participant Case and Context: Rebecca Rosenberg

Rebecca Rosenberg is a mid-life career changer with a strong educational background and many years of success as a student. She was born to a Jewish family in a Midwestern state where few Jewish families lived but moved to a major metropolitan area on the east coast when she was 12. As a student, she consistently demonstrated leadership qualities and confidence. For instance, Rebecca recalled an instance of "taking her teacher on" in the fifth grade and eventually getting transferred to another class as a result. Additionally, during her undergraduate work, she took a leadership role in bringing popular educationist Jonathan Kozol to campus to speak with students. Through these described incidents and others, Rebecca demonstrated always taking an active role in her learning.

Rebecca graduated from a prestigious, undergraduate college, having completed all of the qualifications to become a secondary English teacher. However, she chose not to go into teaching because she felt she was too young to work effectively with teenagers. Therefore, she went on to earn a graduate degree and eventually worked in finance and hospital administration where she had a very successful career. Despite her career success, she came to a point where she felt it was time to head down a different career path and finally decided to enter teaching.

During her teacher preparation experiences, Rebecca received a scholarship to participate in a cohort-based, urban-focused teacher education program where all of the courses were designed around the themes of "promoting social justice," "constructing knowledge," "inquiring into practice," "accommodating diversity," and "collaborating with others." A major element of her teacher preparation experiences was practicums in local, urban elementary schools. Each of the schools that Rebecca worked in had high numbers of Students of Color, students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch, and students who were multilingual and still learning English.

Rebecca began her student practicum during a summer session at the school that eventually hired and fired her. She then worked in another local elementary school for a semester in a mainstream second-grade classroom with an experienced teacher who had a well-established partnership with the teacher education program and university. This placement was intended to last for a year, but due to conflict that arose between Rebecca and her cooperating teacher, she transferred to a different school where she worked with advanced sixth-grade students. Some of the conflict Rebecca experienced in the second-grade classroom stemmed from her critiques of the cooperating teacher. Rebecca believed that the cooperating teacher's "expectations are kind of diminished," using materials that were at a kindergarten level rather than challenging the students and offering grade level content and skills. In her final practicum placement, Rebecca once again experienced conflict with her cooperating teacher who at one point demanded that Rebecca leave the classroom and never again return. Across all of these settings, Rebecca had successes and challenges, but conflict with adults in the various school settings was consistently a factor. She did, however, build strong relationships with some students and their parents and also engaged in some creative lesson planning and teaching. For instance, as a student teacher she brought guest speakers to the classroom and planned and executed well-received fieldtrips with the help of students and parents. She also showed great skill in using data to inform her planning and instructional practices.

After she completed the teacher preparation program, Rebecca was hired as a fourth-grade English Language Arts teacher at the school where her student teaching began. At this school, fourth graders worked with one teacher for math and another teacher for English; therefore, Rebecca worked with a larger number of students and only saw them for a portion of the day. While she was initially impressed with the school community and felt she had landed a great job, she consistently held reservations about this model of teaching for fourth graders. Rebecca felt that students would be better off working with one teacher across content areas rather than moving classrooms and teachers each day.

Over the course of the first two months of school, Rebecca's classroom became a very chaotic space with many behavior issues and disruptions. Furthermore, Rebecca did not develop strong relationships with her administrators and mentors, nor did she take their suggestions in dealing with the challenges she was facing. For these reasons, coupled with the issues described below, Rebecca was eventually terminated just days before her initial probationary period ended.

**Results and Discussion**

Rebecca's definition of teaching for social justice centered on notions of fairness, respect for pupil differences, and the provision of opportunity and access to students. How Rebecca operationalized this definition into classroom practice, however, changed over time. Throughout her student teaching and early career in a local, urban school, Rebecca held fast to notions of individual fairness and opportunity while her beliefs about accommodating diversity, regarding students' culture and learning styles, changed significantly. In our analysis of the data, we coded many instances related to relationships of respect but noted an absence of themes of pupil learning, teacher as activist, and recognizing inequalities. We found that many of Rebecca's ideas about teaching for

social justice were actually problematic from a CRT perspective, thus perpetuating uncritical perceptions of race, schooling, and meritocracy.

This section presents an analysis of Rebecca's views of teaching for social justice. Specifically, we show how Rebecca defined what it meant to teach for social justice, how this definition influenced her teaching, and how her teaching practices evolved into instruction that ultimately contradicted what Rebecca thought she was accomplishing. Finally, we demonstrate how majoritarian stories help explain Rebecca's beliefs about teaching for social justice and how her perceptions ultimately led to her getting fired from her first teaching position.

**Rebecca's Perceptions of Teaching for Social Justice**

At the start of her pre-service program, Rebecca's reflections on the definition of teaching for social justice emphasized respecting pupil differences, creating a classroom community that was fair to all students, and differentiating instruction according to students' background knowledge and personal interests. When asked to define "social justice" in her first case study interview as she started the program, Rebecca highlighted the importance of respecting multicultural diversity, asserting that, "it doesn't mean the parade of today is Indian Day, today is Jewish Day, today is African-American Day." Instead, social justice, for her, centered around "[living] with another person's culture" and "broadly accepting" various lived experiences.

The principle of interest convergence illuminates how all of these notions can limit racial and social progress and actually perpetuate white privilege. Notions of fairness are powerful tools used by dominant groups to solidify their powerful positions since their interests must be served for anything to be considered "fair." Similarly, Rebecca's perception of "accepting" multicultural diversity perpetuated dominance for groups as it demonstrates that one group does the accepting over the groups who must strive for acceptance. As interest convergence would assert, neither of these notions can substantially support social justice and racial progress systemically.

Despite Rebecca's verbal commitment to the importance and "acceptance" of different cultures, Rebecca's practice in the classroom never demonstrated a commitment to cultural responsiveness. Instead, for Rebecca, these beliefs translated into classroom practice primarily through the teacher's ability to create a fair classroom community and to accommodate different learning styles and strengths. Along with her reflections on social justice in her first interview, Rebecca imagined "creating a bill of rights for the classroom" to promote fairness. In her final practicum placement, Rebecca reflected on using democratic notions of fairness to develop classroom policies. When a few students expressed discomfort during an outdoor lesson and urged that the class be moved back indoors, Rebecca held a class vote and ceded to the majority opinion to move the class inside. In a subsequent interview, Rebecca reflected on the importance of this event in teaching students about fairness and in creating a democratic classroom climate, noting that "these little opportunities are, to me, about justice and fairness." Yet, in these examples, "justice" and "fairness" were enacted according to the will of the majority, or the group with the most power. Again, from the perspective of interest convergence, this can limit actual equity and social justice. Research has demonstrated how majority rule can lead to a tyranny of the majority with little care for issues of race, class, gender,

language, and other forms of oppression (Cline, Necochea, & Rio, 2004; Dixson & Dingus, 2007).

Although notions of fairness remained prominent throughout her reflections on teaching for social justice, her beliefs about differentiated instruction changed dramatically. Early in her pre-service program, Rebecca's beliefs about teaching for social justice emphasized accommodating instruction for different learners and appealing to students' background knowledge and interests. Reflecting on her observations of an experienced teacher, Rebecca admired that "[the cooperating teacher] did such a good job of volleying between the required text and kids doing writing and presenting stuff of their own interest." Likewise, in planning lessons for her upcoming takeover in her second practicum placement, Rebecca noted that "she is attempting to [embrace] values as well as content" in her instruction. For Rebecca, accommodating student learning meant "[meeting] the needs of every kid in an equal and embraced way" and "[giving] every kid a voice"—two notions that were consistent with her beliefs about fairness. In Rebecca's early reflections, she defined teaching for social justice as giving every student a chance to see her/himself in both the scripted and hidden curriculum. This was important to Rebecca primarily because it conveyed to students that, if given a fair chance, "anyone can do great things" in school and society. However, this perspective overlooks the reality of contemporary racial hierarchies and the prevalence of interest convergence in public and policy decisions, which maintain the long-standing hierarchy.

Once she began her student teaching, our analysis indicated an absence of key elements and themes related to teaching for social justice as identified by Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2009), which represented a dramatic shift from the ideas around social justice Rebecca espoused. In stark contrast to her earlier statements about teaching for social justice, Rebecca adamantly rejected instruction that acknowledged students' social and cultural contexts and advocated for tracked classrooms that moderated expectations based on student ability. A critical incident early in Rebecca's final practicum illustrates her anathema for instruction that recognized and respected students' lived experiences. After her cooperating teacher referred to the other sixth-grade class as "animals," one of the students accused her of racism. When the boy's father was called to the school, he excoriated his son for accusing the teacher of racism using a metaphor repeated often in Rebecca's retelling of the story. In Rebecca's words: "The father said to him, 'You're stomping on the graves of our ancestors. You say that and you're disrespecting every person who really experienced racism.'" Rebecca described the father's intervention as "powerful" and decided to relay the story to the rest of the class. Reflecting on the story, she further justified her beliefs about racism, explaining:

> [The students] have a sense of what it looks like. We had just studied *The Letter from the Birmingham Jail* with the kids watching films of children who were attacked with water hoses that tore their clothes off. That's racism. And, I don't feel like there's racism at [our school].

In Rebecca's perspective, students were wrong to believe they were experiencing racism. Further, by stating that students should have known what racism was after having studied *The Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, Rebecca effectively discounted all the very real encounters with racism that students experienced in their lives. In other words, she

discredited the experiential knowledge that is a centerpiece of teaching for social justice (Zeichner, 2009).

Likewise, once placed in a local, urban school, Rebecca became a strident advocate for ability tracking, contradicting an earlier comment on accommodating differences as "a really good platitude." In perhaps her most jarring defense of tracking, Rebecca charged that inclusion was "not so easy when you've got unpleasant, learning disabled kids who distract your classroom." Similarly, despite earlier commitments embracing language diversity "even if it means code switching," Rebecca lamented having to find ways to adjust instruction according to language differences "without being insulting." Viewed out of context, these comments appear to be mere frustrated musings of an overwhelmed, urban teacher. A closer look at Rebecca's data indicates that, instead, Rebecca's frustrations appear to be sourced in deeply held beliefs about individuality and access as central to teaching for social justice. In a later interview, Rebecca summarized teaching for social justice as providing "opportunity and access." Similarly, Rebecca repeatedly endorsed instruction that "[embraces] the individuality of who the kids are," regardless of race or social group membership. Viewed this way, the racial incident described earlier was problematic for Rebecca because it, in part, defined students according to their race, rather than the idealized notion of individuality that was central to Rebecca's conception of fairness. In her view, social justice educators looked beyond students' racial identities to see into their "true" abilities and needs. According to Rebecca, social justice educators understood their students as post-racial individuals who stand above superficial social distinctions.

Inclusion was similarly frustrating for Rebecca because it prevented her from approaching students according to their "individual needs." Inclusion, according to Rebecca, blended learning styles and abilities so much that it diluted instructional efficacy at the individual level. A strict adherent to notions of an idealized individualism, Rebecca felt that classrooms inclusive of cultural and intellectual differences prevented her from meeting her students as autonomous individuals.

In this way, Rebecca's beliefs about individualism align with what Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) refer to as "utilitarian individualism," which emphasizes freedom to pursue self-interest as constitutive of a good society. Preserved by the iconic American rags-to-riches narrative, utilitarian individualism values "the chance for the individual to get ahead on his own initiative" (p. 33). For utilitarian individualists, "the focus was so exclusively on individual self-interest that the larger social context hardly came into view" (p. 33). The fundamental idea is that pursuing one's self-interests will create social good. Ironically, then, in inclusive, multicultural classrooms, Rebecca felt that she was unable to uphold the notions of fairness to the individual that were central to her social outlook and, therein, her conception of teaching for social justice.

Consistent with utilitarian individualism, Rebecca viewed social improvement as an aggregate of individual achievement. In direct contrast with CRT scholarship, a utilitarian individualist's notion of social justice is more about preserving a certain, and perhaps mythical, notion of individual autonomy than it is about addressing social structures and discourses that maintain racial inequity. Furthermore, her aspiration for a colorblind, ability-tracked classroom directly conflicted with the socially conscious instruction promoted by the CRT and social justice traditions. As we demonstrate below, persistent,

hegemonic ideologies regarding racial and intellectual differences and notions of meritocratic social ascendance buttress these beliefs.

### The Role of Majoritarian Stories in Rebecca's Practice and Perceptions

Our investigation of the case of Rebecca Rosenberg uncovered significant evidence that interest convergence and the three majoritarian stories identified by Mitchell (2012b) play a prominent role in Rebecca's embrace of colorblind, ability-tracked instruction. Our findings are organized around these three stories and how they played out in Rebecca's experiences; however, it is important to note that these stories do not exist in isolation. They are interwoven and interconnected through discussions, practices, and various perceptions of students and teaching in complex and complementary ways. Despite their interconnectedness, the following discussions will analyze one majoritarian story at a time for the purpose of showing how the major features of each story manifest themselves in Rebecca's teaching and learning. Despite our unitary analysis, we acknowledge these stories support and compound one another in their perpetuation of hegemonic ideologies that privilege some and marginalize others.

**There is no story about race.** As described above, Rebecca's focus on fairness, individuality, and "opportunity and access" endorsed and promoted the majoritarian story that minimizes race by rejecting the salience of race and racism. Rebecca expressed a belief that racism was a thing of the past that centered on violent acts of prejudice rather than a systemic issue that continues to oppress and discriminate today. In our initial interviews with Rebecca, she described herself as being raised Jewish in a predominantly non-Jewish area, and, therefore, understood issues of racism; however, through her discussions over time, she tended to minimize race and focus on issues like effort and her perception of student aptitude. During an observation of Rebecca in her final practicum, she demonstrated her minimization of issues around race in the classroom and society by saying to a student, "I don't want to hear the word racist in any context. Why does it come up so much in this room?" When Rebecca discussed this incident in an interview, she stated, "So basically if someone makes the claim when they're not succeeding that it's about racism, it diminishes the success of every kid who's working hard." She went on to discuss the importance of taking responsibility and having "zero tolerance"[4] for students using racism as an excuse, thus linking the insignificance of race story with the majoritarian story that celebrates meritocracy.

For Rebecca, race was a now-empty epithet used to express disrespect for someone's individual worth. As described in a final reflection on what a "utopian" classroom looks like, Rebecca stated that cultural differences are a means of transcending racial categorization to meet each other on equal intellectual grounds:

> I thought, there was something really utopian about [the students' behavior]. What they would call each other on was intellectual stuff by and large. The few incidences that came up about race or sex, you know, "You're sexist" or "It's because I'm Black," the way the kids took that on and didn't tolerate it I just

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[4] "Zero tolerance" is a racially loaded term and practice used by criminal justice and school discipline officials (For more information, see Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, 2011).

thought was really kind of inspiring. It's like something to hold on to because, it really is a high standard. And I guess, the social justice, the language overlaps with embracing diversity, respecting diversity but I guess, you know, that those kids by and large had made their diversity intellectual diversity and the empowerment of having opinions and supporting them, that's something to strive for.

Rebecca's stance towards what she termed "the language of racism" in her classroom exposed her commitment to a colorblind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) and the "post-racial" (Cho, 2009) stance that the Civil Rights Movement solved issues of racism in the United States. As described above, Rebecca believed her students in her final practicum should know racism not from first-hand experiences in school and society, but from "watching films of children who were attacked with water hoses that tore their clothes off." She further described:

> I look around that room and the demographics of the room are [not] dramatically different from any other classroom in the school. And they don't feel like there's a lower level of expectation of kids of any ethnicity, from her [Rebecca's cooperating teacher] tolerating less from them in a sort of backwards racism.

From these statements, we see that Rebecca conceptualized racism as overt acts of prejudice and neglected forms of more discrete, institutional racism that operate in today's schools and society. Her perception of institutional racism appeared to be grounded in teachers' low expectations of students and racially segregated classrooms within a school that was itself highly racially segregated in terms of the overall student population. Specifically, Rebecca was working in a school with nearly only Students of Color, a prevalent issue in urban contexts that is pushing researchers to claim that schools today are more segregated than schools were before the Civil Rights Movement (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Garces, 2008; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003). Rebecca's perceptions around race issues in schools stand in contrast to the CRT perspective, which exposes more covert forms of institutional racism that serve to perpetuate white dominance and privilege through institutional actors and structures that operate under the guise of white normativity and interest convergence.

Rebecca's perpetuation of the majoritarian story that there-is-no-story-about race led to multiple issues in her first year teaching, where faculty, staff, and administration embraced a critical stance toward issues of racial injustice. Rebecca described her experiences at the school and felt she was being patrolled by the "culture police" saying,

> My mentor is an African-American woman, the principal is African American, the director of instruction…is Hispanic. Legitimately, I think in schools where it's a majority of Black and Hispanic kids and there are no White kids and you have a White teacher, they want to make sure that the White teacher doesn't have any seeming condescension. Now, the examples they used [of Rebecca's cultural insensitivity] struck me as, if you're looking to hear something, you're going to hear it.

From a CRT perspective, her use of the term "cultural police" and her racial identification of several of the leaders of the school illustrated a fundamental commitment to minimizing race and what Pollock (2004) calls "'colormuteness'—that is, the routine act of knowingly deleting race words from discourse, rather than being truly 'color-blind'" (p. 35). Though minimizing race and endorsing a colorblind ideology, Rebecca still acknowledged the role of race as she named the races of her administrators and acknowledged her own positionality as a White teacher. Yet, Rebecca never recognized how an acknowledgement or understanding of race might have been affecting her own experiences and issues as a new teacher, as well as how white normativity and privilege colored her own perspective (McIntosh, 1993).

Our cultural and social institutions were developed based on racial domination and white privilege; therefore, contemporary instances of racialization that distribute power and privilege to Whites at the expense of others are rampant. For this reason, it is likely that if one looks for issues of injustice around race, one will find them; however, the frequent and institutionalized nature of inequitable racialized practices and outcomes in our schools and society today does not justify the perpetuation of them. Rebecca's notion that she was a target of the "cultural police" minimized the issues around race the school administration attempted to discuss with her. In addition, Rebecca appeared to reject the authority of her Administrators of Color with this accusation. Because of her continued and substantial endorsement of the there-is-no-story-about-race majoritarian story, she was unable to participate meaningfully in these discussions and, therefore, unable to improve her practice to a level that would have enabled her to maintain her employment.

**Difference is deficit.** Rebecca had an ability to build strong relationships with some of her students as well as their parents; however, she also showed a tendency to view students, parents, and colleagues through a deficit lens, which limited her ability to teach effectively. In fact, Rebecca's principal described her final decision to fire Rebecca saying, "Deep down, if I had to say what it was, I think it was a belief system. That the children could not do well." Rebecca's middle- to upper-class background and the fact that she had two young children attending high performing public schools appeared to affect her perceptions of effective practice, success, and meaningful methods of learning engagement. She often drew comparisons between her children and the students she taught in ways that showed a disparaging view of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For example, in her final interview she compared the learning opportunities her sons had to those of her students and said, "For my son, there's a lot of aspiring and for the kids in my classroom there's very little to aspire to." This classed and racialized perspective of her students' lives both inside and outside of school overlooked the rich resources in terms of culture, language, and life experiences the students bring to the classroom community and learning environment.

In addition to this classed and racialized lens, Rebecca perceived and described students through a deficit lens. For instance, Rebecca's principal recounted some incidences where Rebecca used terms like "uncivilized" and "inmates" to describe her students and their behavior in her class. In addition, the administrator reported that Rebecca had substantial classroom management issues, citing instances where students were running through the halls and even around the classroom. During one of our research observations, Rebecca chased a student across the classroom and often yelled at

students in response to undesired behavior. Despite evidence of poor classroom management, Rebecca never felt that these issues were the result of anything she was doing wrong. In discussing the problem behaviors of students in her class, Rebecca compared her students to her own children and explained,

> In many ways, for most kids, they're playing out some microcosm of the way they see relationships. And I'm sure that happens in my kids' school too. I'm not close enough to see it. And I think my kids' school tends to have fewer major challenges. They tend to have employed parents. Many of them live with both parents. They don't have the insecurities in their lives.

Further, Rebecca said, "You can't change what's happening at home. I felt there was no good setting to discuss behavior issues and to discuss the complex interplay of behavior and real problems because there were real problems behind a lot of those issues." In this instance and several more, Rebecca appeared to be blaming the challenging behavior issues she faceed in class on the students' lives outside of school. If this was truly the cause of poor behavior in Rebecca's class, then she was not to blame, but rather her students, their families, and their communities were. Thus, she necessarily endorsed the difference-as-deficit narrative by blaming the students and others for her classroom challenges.

In our final interview with the principal, she underscored that Rebecca's inability to claim responsibility for problems in her classroom was a major reason for terminating her employment. The principal recounted:

> We gave her an evaluation, which you know, we went over the evaluation with her and a plan of support and everything we presented she had a reason why that wouldn't work. I mean, every single piece. And then I just went home and came back the next day and said this really is not going to work. You know, I can't convince you. It would be different if you were doing a good job and then you wanted to question or refine it. Everybody who works with me knows that I'm all for that. But you're not doing a good job. What I told her was I'm not guessing what I'm telling you to do. I've been doing this for a long time. I know what works. You don't really know yet.

The conversations we had with Rebecca confirmed that Rebecca did not find personal fault in any of the problems in her classroom. Rather, Rebecca discussed the problems she was facing in her practice as resulting from the imposed instructional models, the students' lives outside of school, and the students' low skill set.

Blaming students' disruptive behavior in class on their lives outside of school or their low skill set is a way to position students as deficient in the classroom. In addition, Rebecca's critiques of the instructional model were based upon the idea that certain knowledge mattered more than others. For instance, she critiqued the school's curriculum materials because they suggested that students develop their writing capacities by writing about something they knew how to do very well. According to Rebecca, the curriculum suggested students should "[write] as an expert about taking care of your siblings or making a recipe," which she critiqued saying, "We've denied these kids any content

knowledge in a really explicit way and now we're having them write about these mundane things like how to wash dishes." While it would be very difficult to argue that students do not need access to content knowledge, the problematic aspect of this comment was the way Rebecca disparaged and delegitimized the "expert" knowledge the students have. This perspective was further illustrated by Rebecca's response at a professional development retreat with the whole school faculty at a local art museum. Rebecca took issue with the proposed approach to art interpretation because it emphasized students' perceptions of the art work rather than fostering traditional art interpretation or teaching information about the artist and the artistic time period. Rebecca was extremely vocal in her criticisms of this approach, stating that it denied students access to important knowledge. For Rebecca, this was a violation of teaching for social justice. However, her colleagues and administrators were very uncomfortable with Rebecca's critiques because of her perceived delegitimization of student perspectives.

Rebecca's endorsement of the difference-is-deficit majoritarian story appeared to have impacted various issues in her classroom practice and teaching experience. If something did not fit into her perception of quality learning and teaching, informed by her affluent, privileged White background, it was problematic. This perspective stands fundamentally in contrast to the conceptions espoused in culturally relevant pedagogy and critical multiculturalism (Gatimu, 2009) as well as CRT principles where the experiential knowledge of People of Color is deeply valued (Matsuda et al., 1993). While few critical pedagogues would strive to deny students' access to the discourses and knowledge of power, a quality education for all children builds from the assets and strengths they bring to the learning environment while facilitating critiques of the discourses and knowledge of power (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). When a teacher operates from a difference-is-deficit perspective, it is difficult for that teacher to identify, value, and help students utilize their own assets for learning, critiquing, or transforming issues of inequity in school and society. Further, a teacher who endorses this majoritarian story would prefer, as Rebecca did, ability-tracked classrooms over heterogeneous classrooms where mixed-life experiences and abilities would complicate the learning process.

**Meritocracy is appropriate.** As described earlier, Rebecca substantially endorsed the meritocratic majoritarian story, particularly through her focus on individualism and individual effort. In our earlier discussion of her definition and conceptualization of social justice, it became apparent that Rebecca's commitment to meritocracy impacted her interactions with students. However, this narrative regarding meritocracy also illuminated how she viewed herself and her work as a teacher. Since she felt that her successes in life resulted from her hard work, she believed that students only needed to work hard to succeed. While her incredible work ethic and impressive career successes before she entered teaching are noteworthy, her inability to acknowledge how various privileges and opportunities helped her family succeed lead her to substantially endorse the myth of meritocracy.

Instead of taking a critical stance on the curriculum and its white normative knowledge, Rebecca articulated that she felt that social justice was about "access and equity. Exposure to exactly what any kid in America deserves exposure to. And I guess for me what that means is exactly what my kids are being exposed to." Again, Rebecca

held her children's life and educational experiences as the desired norm and did not take a critical stance regarding the types of knowledge and curriculum utilized in school. Rebecca did not embrace the idea that non-dominant knowledge or a curriculum that disrupts white normativity might promote social justice and equity—a belief that supported her endorsement of meritocracy as well as the difference-is-deficit narrative.

Furthermore, because of her belief in meritocracy, Rebecca deeply felt that her hard work as a teacher should have paid off with different results. Rebecca spent a great deal of time designing curriculum, analyzing data, and planning for her classes. She was creative in her work and extremely detailed. She had many good ideas and made extensive efforts to reach out to parents. The principal even complimented Rebecca's work ethic after she was fired. Despite all of her hard work, Rebecca's classroom was still extremely chaotic, and her lessons often did not go as planned. When a teacher subscribes to the meritocratic majoritarian story, what happens when his or her own hard work does not translate into a successful, classroom learning environment? In a way, Rebecca's endorsement of the meritocracy-is-appropriate majoritarian story helped her further endorse the difference-is-deficit perspective as well. Rebecca knew she was working extremely hard and it was not getting the results she expected or wanted; therefore, someone else was at fault (e.g., the instructional model, the students' home lives, the low skills of the students) for her classroom challenges. As mentioned above, the principal cited this issue in her final decision to fire Rebecca when she alluded to the fact that Rebecca was unresponsive to the administrative team's effort to help her improve her practice. As the principal reported, "everything we presented, she had a reason why that wouldn't work. I mean every single piece." Rebecca's failure to assume responsibility was extremely discouraging to the principal. The principal realized she would not be able to convince Rebecca to accept her support, so she felt it would be best for all parties if Rebecca were let go.

Rebecca felt that she was treated with such unfairness and inconsistency she composed and sent a scathing email about the school and her experiences there to both a local reporter as well as the superintendent of schools. In her correspondence, she described a "witch hunt mentality" where "questioning and intellectual discourse is severely chastised" and where there was "an understood, whispered, awareness of culture police—always looking for evidence of cultural insensitivities." She described her perspective on many issues, including how her quick dismissal prevented accurate reporting of students' grades, something she "would be disgusted to know" if it had happened to one of her children. In an interview with the principal after Rebecca was fired, the principal brought up the content of this email to the superintendent and stated that "it was just lies." In the end, the superintendent never made any response to the email nor did the reporter run a story. Despite the email's futility, the email exposed Rebecca's commitment to all of the majoritarian stories described above. She minimized race, promoted a deficit ideology of students and families, and endorsed meritocracy. While it is evident that the situation was difficult for Rebecca and she did put forth her best effort, from the perspective of CRT, social justice, and equity, ending her teaching career at that point may have been for the best for both her and her students as she was not teaching to transform or disrupt inequity.

## Implications

This research underscores the substantial work to be done in preparing reflective teachers who work to disrupt the overarching cultural myths and majoritarian stories that may be guiding their practice and teacher development. Moreover, it suggests that more research must be undertaken to examine how interest convergence perpetuates white normativity and privilege in teacher education. As this case study of the experiences of one teacher candidate/novice illustrates, teacher candidates can and do complete their preparation program with a limited ability to teach for social justice even in programs with clear dedication and attention to addressing issues of social justice in school and society. To date, the dearth of effective means of broaching and exploring beliefs and dispositions and hesitancy on the part of faculty and teacher candidates to genuinely grapple with issues that provoke strong emotion and resistance (Gay, 2010) has limited the ability to address and transform the embedded majoritarian perspectives of teacher candidates. Secondly, as noted by Juárez and colleagues (2008), teacher preparation requires true *re-visioning* on a systemic basis—not simply another *revision* of current programs that maintain white majoritarian perspectives, but active re-visioning to equip teacher candidates for diverse and multicultural classrooms of the 21st century. This case study provides useful evidence of the value of such work, as well as tangible examples of how majoritarian stories can manifest themselves in classroom practice to the detriment of student learning and teacher success.

Further, this case study illustrates the potential inconsistency in teachers claiming to teach for social justice and the practices that emerge from actual beliefs endorsing hegemonic ideologies that distribute power and privilege based on race, class, gender, language, ability, etc. While we do live in a country where "we pledge allegiance to a country that supposedly stands for 'liberty and justice for all'" (Hytten & Bettez, 2011, p. 8), Rebecca's case clearly demonstrates a need for conceptual clarity and consistency in what it means to teach for social justice. Therefore, we agree with Porfilio and Malott (2011):

> Not only do we believe that teacher educators must take the lead in helping their students recognize the social, political, and economic forces creating injustice in schools and in the wider society, but they must help current and future teachers develop emancipatory visions of how to develop instructional designs, collaborate with educators, and engage in activist initiatives which have the potential to eliminate social inequalities and build institutional structures based on democracy, equity, and fairness. (pp. 63–64)

This statement suggests that teachers and teacher educators need to take open stances that challenge the majoritarian stories that minimize race, position difference as deficit, and endorse meritocracy as appropriate. Engaging in teaching and scholarship from the perspective of CRT is a meaningful way to accomplish this, for it represents proactive resistance to interest convergence, which privileges whiteness and successfully counters majoritarian stories.

It appears that Bartolomé's (2004) call for teachers to develop political and ideological clarity is an important piece in the development of teachers who claim to

teach for social justice. In Rebecca's case, her explanations of her own privilege affected the way she saw her students and their learning experiences. By minimizing her own privilege, she was also able to minimize her students' backgrounds. Because of her idealized notions of the individual who stands outside of race or privilege and succeeds based on hard work and effort, she struggled to understand how her perspectives might have influenced the issues she faced in the classroom. It appears that if Rebecca had an "ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape [her life]" and had engaged in "the process by which individuals struggle to identify and compare their own explanations for the existing socioeconomic and political hierarchy with the dominant society's" (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98), she would have developed political and ideological clarity, which could have changed her teaching and career.

Porfilio and Malott (2011) recognize the time and effort underlying such transformative practices. First, teacher educators themselves need to gain political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé, 2004) around their own perceptions and biases and self-monitor for the ways they may be promoting or endorsing majoritarian stories. This is particularly important in order to avoid issues of interest convergence and the perpetuation of white privilege and dominance through teacher education policies and practices. White teacher educators need to take a much stronger stance in un-doing the whiteness that reigns in teacher education spaces. Second, teacher educators and teachers need to work together over time to develop counter-methodologies that can truly promote social justice and equity and disrupt racialized hierarchies. It is likely that the time during teacher preparation alone will not be enough to fully develop socially just teachers capable of disrupting the inequitable status quo (Agarwal et al., 2010; Silverman, 2010). Therefore, teacher educators and teachers need to engage in meaningful collective educator development over the career of a teacher, not just during their pre-service training. In many cases, this will require improved, mutually beneficial, and more comprehensive collaborations with schools and districts on the part of teacher educators. Furthermore, these collaborations will need to put the needs of Communities of Color first and avoid prioritizing White interests. In other words, these collaborations need to disrupt current distributions of power and privilege in order to diminish inequitable practices.

Finally, this study suggests that the theoretical lens of CRT and its emphasis on the centrality and persistence of race and racism may enable White teachers, teacher educators, and teacher candidates toward a perspective of critical whiteness (Allen, 2004). Matias (2013) has done innovative work in this field to "debunk White epistemology of ignorance by redirecting the impact of racial microaggressions onto Whites instead of people of colour in hopes that Whites share the burden of understanding their Whiteness and its role in race, racism, and White supremacy" (p. 5). Our investigation of Rebecca and her engagement with identified majoritarian stories (Mitchell, 2012b) showed how powerful dominant ideologies remain, even with those who express a commitment to social justice. Therefore, the work in teacher education that substantially challenges whiteness and white normativity appears to be necessary to actually transform issues around social justice and equity in classrooms.

Sleeter (2009) argued that:

As a field, teacher education has never been a bastion of social justice, although many teacher educators have worked tirelessly and creatively to create strong social justice oriented teacher education programs…But the field as a whole has always tended to be fairly traditional, mainly oriented toward preparing young White women for established missions and practices of school. (p. 611)

This study of Rebecca Rosenberg supports Sleeter's assertion. If we are to truly prepare teachers to teach for social justice, a radically different form of teacher education is necessary. That is, teacher education must be powerful enough to disrupt the hegemonic ideologies and majoritarian stories regarding race, difference, and meritocracy in schools (Grant & Agosto, 2008; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

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