January 2001

Racial Ideology and Teaching Practice: A Conceptual Framework

Kelly Demers
kdemers@anselm.edu

A Conceptual Framework

Racial Ideology and Teaching Practice

Kelly E. Demers

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe how a qualitative researcher constructed a conceptual framework. This framework arose from a two-case, critically-oriented study. It provided the researcher with an analytic tool for interpreting how the ideological assumptions of two White elementary teachers shaped their constructions of race and what these constructions meant in terms of each participant's teaching practice. Included in this piece is a summary of the study from which the framework emerged, as well as a description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as its structural foundation. Following is a detailed description of each dimension of the framework, and an example of how these dimensions helped answer the research questions driving the study for one of the two cases. The article concludes with a discussion of next steps for the continued development of this framework.

Introduction

There is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty as to the differences between a theoretical and conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014; Green, 2014). As a result, these terms are often vaguely defined and frequently used interchangeably—sometimes within the same research report (e.g., Rathert et al, 2012). However, theoretical and conceptual frameworks each represent a different construct (Imenda, 2014). A theoretical framework, for example, represents "the application of a theory, or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory" (Imenda, p. 189) such as

Kelly E. Demers is an associate professor in the Department of Education at Saint Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire. E-mail: kdemers@anselm.edu

Piaget's cognitive theory of childhood development. Generally, this theory is determined before a research project begins and serves as a guide to researchers as they conduct their research projects. A conceptual framework, on the other hand, is composed from *all* aspects of a research project including the problem statement, the research question, epistemological and methodological choices, the literature review, interpretation of data (Maxwell, 2013), and the theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). The construction of a conceptual framework can occur prior to conducting a particular research project (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), it can represent an outcome of a particular study (Green, 2014), or it can occur through an iterative process where the final product is continuously examined and revised based upon research findings (Maxwell, 2013).

Given that a conceptual framework is built from so many different components and can be constructed at different points within the research process, many researchers often feel overwhelmed when attempting to create a framework for their own investigations. The article presented here illustrates such a process. It describes the construction and usage of a conceptual framework called the *racial geography of teaching*. This framework arose from a two-case study that I conducted, which was informed by a critical ethnographic methodology. It provided me with a lens for interpreting how the culturally embedded ideological assumptions of two White, urban elementary school teachers in the United States, working within two different urban school contexts, shaped their constructions of race and what these constructions meant in terms of each participant's individual teaching practice.

The K-12 student population in the U.S. continues to become more racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse at the same time the teaching force is becoming increasingly White, female, and culturally homogenous (Banks & Banks, 2013). This demographic difference represents a widening sociocultural gap between teachers and students. In order to explore this phenomenon, this investigation was rooted within a critical qualitative paradigm that was supported by a body of literature, drawn from the fields of education, sociology, and philosophy that addressed the role that ideologies and discourses play in shaping the racial ethos embedded within U.S. public schools and the culture at-large, as well as the racial attitudes, values, and beliefs White teachers hold about race and racism. By sharing the story of how these research components shaped the construction of the *racial geography of teaching*, I am offering other critically-oriented qualitative researchers with a methodological model that has the potential of helping them navigate the multiple steps that go into creating conceptual frameworks for their own investigations.

In order to fully understand the development of the *racial geography of teaching* framework, I will begin with a short literature review that clarifies what a conceptual framework is and what purposes it serves within a given study. This is followed by a brief summary of the study from which the framework emerged. Next, I offer an in-depth description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as the structural foundation for the conceptual framework. After this, a detailed description of the

framework is provided that includes a definition of each dimension, and an example of how this dimension helped answer the research questions driving the study for *one* of the two cases. The article will then conclude with a discussion of how I will continue to use the *racial geography of teaching* framework.

Literature Review

In deductive quantitative research, researchers generally center their investigations on applying and testing a pre-existing theoretical perspective and framework (Imenda, 2014). Qualitative research, on the other hand, usually engages in a process of inductive reasoning that works to build and develop original theory (Merriam, 1998). Although qualitative research often does not work to test a specific theory, it is rooted in a "system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs [the] research" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). This "system" is referred to as the conceptual framework of a study. Unlike a theoretical framework, which focuses on a particular theory, the qualitative researcher builds a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2013) from a "set of related concepts" (Imenda, p. 189). These concepts begin with the positionality of the researcher; the research problem driving a particular study; theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research located in a study's literature review; methodological choices; and emergent themes from initial analysis of data (Maxwell, 2005; Ravitch & Riggin, 2016).

According to Imenda (2014), a conceptual framework serves four purposes:

Helps the researcher see clearly the main variables and concepts in a given study;

Provides the researcher with a general approach (methodology—research design, target population and research sample, data collection and analysis);

Guides the researcher in the collection, interpretation, and explanation of the data, where no dominant theoretical perspective exists; and

Guides future research—specifically where the conceptual framework integrates literature review and field data. (p. 193)

In short, the conceptual framework outlines "an argument" that explains "why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous" (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016, p. 5-6).

Origins of the Racial Geography of Teaching Framework

The development of the *racial geography of teaching* framework emerged from an in-depth two-case critically-oriented qualitative study that investigated two questions:

How do the ideological stances of two White elementary school teachers inform their constructions of race?

How do these teachers' ideological stances and constructions of race influence teaching practice?

Like other critically oriented research projects that work to identify and transform structural forms of injustice (Madison, 2005), I designed this two-case study so that it would expose, critique, and challenge the ways that ideological factors consciously and unconsciously shaped the professional judgments and subsequent actions of two White teachers, particularly in regard to race, racism, and the meaning of Whiteness. Because of this a qualitative approach informed by critical ethnography (Madison, 2005) was the most appropriate because it provided me with an opportunity to explore the beliefs, values, and attitudes of White teachers within a culturally rich context.

The cases were comprised of two White urban schoolteachers, each serving a diverse group of students within two different school contexts. Case studies were selected as the unit of analysis for this investigation because they allowed me to explore the relationship between ideology and action in a complex, multivariate context that resulted in a deeply "rich and holistic account" (Merriam, 1998, p. 51).

For each participant, data collection took place over a six-month period. Data sources included semi-structured interviews, observations (participant classroom observations), and a collection of artifacts (lesson plans, curriculum materials, and school mission statements). A major assumption driving this investigation was the belief that all aspects of research—from data collection to analysis—should challenge and transform inequitable power structures. Such a transformation occurs through a dialogic, reflexive process between the researcher and the researched that embraces multiple voices and perspectives "at the same time [it places] them in a historical and ideological framework" (Quantz & O'Connor, 1988, p. 108). Thus, all aspects of data collection were viewed as a participatory process between the researcher and each participant. The data for each participant was analyzed through a method of qualitative analytic induction influenced by the work of Erickson (1986) and Bogdan and Bilken (1998). Two separate sets of themes, one for each participant, emerged from this first stage of analysis.

I developed the *racial geography of teaching* framework after the initial analysis of data. I began its construction by creating a list of the theoretical and conceptual ideas presented in the literature review along with the themes that emerged through the initial analysis. Using this list as a guide, I generated a conceptual map that outlined the connections found between and among these concepts and/or themes. Once completed, this map served as an analytic tool that enabled me to arrange the narrative of each participant so that I addressed the questions driving the study for each individual case.

As noted above, an important component of the *racial of geography of teaching* was located within the study's literature review. What follows is an in-depth description of theoretical and conceptual work that served as a foundation for the conceptual framework.

Structure of the Racial Geography of Teaching

The *racial geography of teaching* framework was built from several separate components—the sociocultural context in which the study took place, the two research questions driving the study, the critical orientation of the research design, themes generated through initial analysis, as well as a rich body of literature that was directly linked to the research questions. All of these components were superimposed on to a foundational structure that was built from three different conceptual models. The first was Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) two-dimensional analytic framework, which she used in an ethnographic study that explored the *material* and *discursive* dimensions of race, racism, and the construction of Whiteness among 30 White women. This served as the skeletal outline of the *racial geography of teaching.* The outline was filled out by two other pre-existing ways of conceptually mapping race for White women—*the social geography of race* (Frankenberg, 1993), which also came from her work on White women, and *racial biography* (Rousmaniere, 2001).

Ideology

An important theoretical aspect of the *racial geography of teaching* centers on scholarship that address the meaning and function of ideology within a particular social or cultural context. The term *ideology* is defined as a system of ideas (Galindo, 1999) that unconsciously shapes and limits beliefs and behaviors (Ott & Mack, 2010). Rooted within this definition is the idea that ideologies "function to create views of reality that appear as the most rational view, a view that is based on 'common sense' notions of how the social world ought to be" (Galindo, 1999, p. 105). These views are so deeply embedded within the psychological thinking of a society that their validity remains unquestioned and unchallenged. In other words, ideologies normalize certain aspects of society by making them appear to be natural phenomena when in reality such phenomena are anything but natural (Ott & Mack, p. 128). Ideologies also "privilege some interests over others" (Ott & Mack, p. 128). These interests emerge from the social group currently in power and are believed to be "more important or valid than those of the socially dominated group" (Ott & Mack, p. 128).

An example of the ways that a specific ideology can function within a society can be found within ideological interpretations of gender (Ott & Mack, 2010). For example, in societies where the dominant ideology associated with gender is rooted within a heterosexual, male-female binary, acceptable expressions of gender are *limited* to only two categories—male or female. Associated with each of these categories is a set of *normalized* behaviors and characteristics that are attributed to biology such as the idea that men are strong, brave, and self-reliant while women are dependent, nurturing, and need protection. This ideology also normalizes heterosexuality over other non-binary, gender-fluid identities. As a result, heterosexuals couples are often afforded a variety of *privileges* that LGBTQ+ individuals do not always have access to such as the right to adopt children or the right to marry without fear of protest.

Material and Discursive Dimensions of Ideologies

Whether centering on politics, religion, race, or gender, embedded within all ideologies are *discursive* and *material* dimensions. The discursive dimension, which serves as a means of disseminating a particular ideological position, includes a range of discursive repertoires that are "fluid" and changeable over time. Each of these repertoires are comprised of a catalogue of practices, which are enacted through formal and informal talk as well as various texts such as websites, news media, comic books, novels, television programs, films, or advertising (Ott & Mack, 2010). These repertoires serve as a filter for the ways in which we view, understand, interpret, construct the material world that we live (Frankenberg, 1993). Material dimensions, on the other hand, are grounded within a physical and tangible realm made up of concrete experiences such as childhood experiences, the past and present "structuring of daily life" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 238), social practices, laws, institutional polices, and/or important local, national, and global historical events.

Conceptually Mapping Race for White Women

To assist in charting the material and discursive dimensions of two White teachers, the *racial geography of teaching* also drew on two pre-existing ways of conceptually mapping race for White women. The first approach came from Frankenberg's (1993) concept of the "social geography of race," (p. 43) which she defines as follows:

> *Geography* refers here to the physical landscape—the home, the street, the neighborhood, the school, parts of town visited or driven through rarely or regularly, places visited on vacation…The notion of *social* geography suggests that the physical landscape is peopled and that it is constituted and perceived by means of social rather than natural processes…*Racial* social geography, in short, refers to the racial and ethnic mapping of environments in physical and social terms and enables also the beginning of an understanding of the conceptual mappings of self and others operating in White women's lives. (p. 43-44, italics in the original)

The second conceptual approach is "racial biography" (Rousmaniere, 2001). Racial biography is a biography that tells the story of an individual's life in terms of the racial experiences they have or have *not* had in their life. An example of this can be found in an essay written by Kate Rousmaniere (2001), which presents a racial biography of educational activist Margaret Haley (1861-1939), a White teacher and founder of the Chicago Teachers' Federation. In this piece, Rousmaniere explores Haley's life and work in terms of the "silence" concerning racial issues. The inclusion of racial biography into the *racial geography of teaching* framework provided the researcher with a means of mapping out the racial experiences each participant engaged in within their childhood, teacher preparation, and current teaching practice.
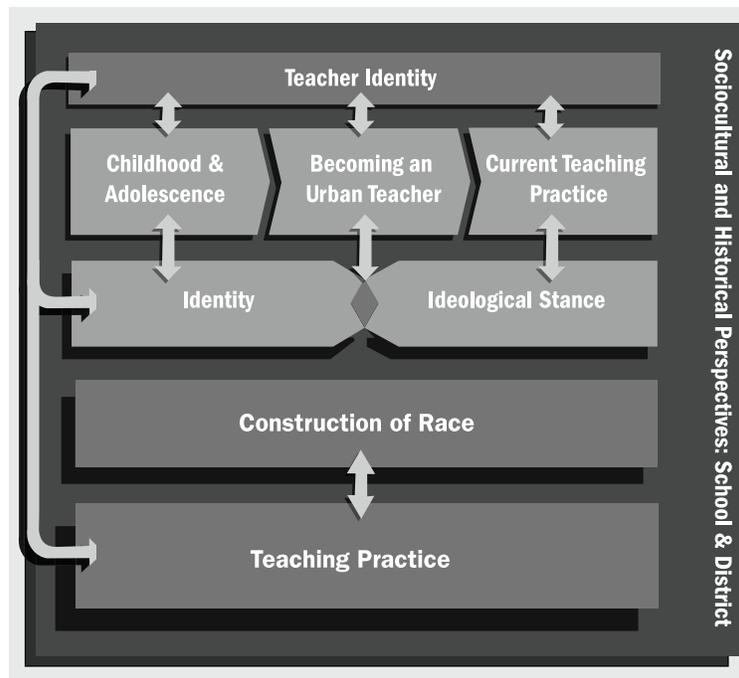
Mapping the Racial Geography of Teaching

Building on the two conceptual approaches and the theoretical work outlined above, as well as the empirical work on the racial attitudes and beliefs of White pre- and in-service teachers and the two sets of themes that emerged through analysis of data, I developed the *racial geography of teaching* framework. The purpose of this framework was to provide an analytic tool that allowed me as the investigator to answer the two research questions driving the study for each case.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the material and discursive dimensions that constitute the *racial geography of teaching.* What follows is a description of this figure that includes a definition of each dimension, and after each description is an example of how this dimension—or set of dimensions—helped me answer the questions driving the study for *one* of the two cases.

Figure 1

The *Racial Geography of Teaching* figure first appeared in Demers, K. (2016), The racial geography of teaching: Helping White preservice teachers understand the impact of racial ideologies in the classroom, *Multicultural Education*, 24(1), 2-11, reproduced here with the permission of Caddo Gap Press.

Material Dimensions: Life History and Sociohistorical Context

Included within the *racial geography of teaching* are two material dimensions. The first, which is represented as a series of three consecutive boxes labeled "childhood and adolescence," "becoming an urban teacher," and "current teaching practice," is located towards the top of Figure 1, and focuses on the *life history* of each participant. Using Frankenberg's (1993) "social geography of race," the three *life history* stages were mapped so as to gain a conceptual understanding of the racial socialization participants experienced during a specific time and place. The second material dimension, which overlaps with the first, is represented on the right side of Figure 1. It focuses on the *sociohistorical context* of each participant's school district and school community at-large. Here, the *social geography of race* was utilized to map out the meaning of race within the physical and social environment of each participant's current professional context.

Material Dimensions Role in Answering the Research Questions

At the time of the study, Megan DeAngelis[1] was 25 years old, unmarried and in her third year of teaching. She worked within the racially diverse urban school district of the North East City Public School (NECPS)—a district that, during the mid-1970s, was torn apart by a racial desegregation plan centered on forced bussing. Megan was assigned an integrated, fourth-grade classroom at the James Elementary School.

Megan's answers to questions about her family (its structure, religious affiliation, political perspective, and racial and ethnic composition) and the community where she grew up and attended school mapped out a cultural and racial landscape that was populated by a close-knit, highly supportive family that included her mother, father, and two older brothers, as well as a large extended family with whom she spent a great deal of time. It also included a suburban neighborhood filled with children who, like her, came from White, Catholic, middle-class families. Thus, the racial geography of her childhood neighborhood was shaped by the overwhelming presence of Whiteness.

The racial homogeneity of Megan's childhood was interrupted by the presence of a handful of urban African American students who were bussed from their urban neighborhoods to the suburban schools that Megan attended throughout her entire K-12 experience. While Megan may have been physically close to her urban African American peers in school, the racial structuring of her environment kept her physically *and* socially distant from them outside of school throughout her entire K-12 experience:

> In high school and in elementary school, I mean, I was friendly with children who were African American…I mean, we never had play dates, but they were in my classes. You know, we worked together. When I played sports in high school,

there were African American children, you know, other kids on my teams…I had definitely experience with African Americans, but they just weren't part of my life. I was with them in school, but outside of school was...not at home. Not in my dance class, gymnastics—nothing outside of school.

These limited experiences with African American peers meant that Megan was only able to have what Carter (1997) refers to as "situational, interracial, social, or occupational interactions with People of Color" (p. 201). As a result, Megan made several assumptions about "urban" environments and the people who inhabited them:

I guess my assumptions of urban school failure were a result of the preconceived notions that were subconsciously instilled in me by my family. I attributed this failure to ineffective teachers, students who didn't care about school, parents who didn't care about their children's schooling, and the violence, which I thought occurred in school. I guess this all came from, again, my parents, and my experience in high school…At one time, I must have asked my parents why children from North East City had to come to come to school [in our town], and I am sure that these were the answers my parents gave me.

In mapping Megan's "social racial geography," it was possible to begin to address aspects of the first question driving this investigation—*How does the ideological stance of this White teacher inform her construction of race?* It became clear that the racial isolation and limited situational experiences with African Americans allowed Megan to interpret her world through an ideological lens of White privilege that defined the schools in her community as "superior" to those where her urban African American peers resided. Not only did the White, suburban schools that Megan attended represent the norm of how schools ought to be, they were also "helping" urban students of color have a better chance in life. In addition to viewing her community as the potential "savior" of students of color, it also appears that Megan, who had no explicit memory of any racial discussions with her family, negotiated racial issues through a discourse of silence. Later, as a practicing teacher, this discursive approach and Megan's limited experience with African Americans made it difficult for her to fully grasp how the bussing crisis of the 1970s continued to shape the current racial landscape of the NECPS.

Discursive Dimensions:
Identity, Ideological Stance, and Teacher Identity

Located just below the three phases of *life history* are two discursive dimensions, *identity* and *ideological stance*, which are represented as two intersecting boxes. For this study, *identity* refers to the ways in which an individual defines herself. Such self-definitions have the potential of changing over time and are rooted within a variety of contexts (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic, or disability statuses as well as perceived personal attributes such as being a hard-worker or having an open-mind. *Ideological stance* refers to the

ideological positions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that an individual uses to interact with and interpret the world around them. Like *identity*, one's *ideological stance* also has the potential of changing over time.

The reason that these two dimensions are overlapping is because ideologies have the power to construct an individual's identity through *interpellation* (Althusser, 2001). According to Althusser, interpellation happens through a process called "hailing," which "occurs when individuals recognize and respond to an encountered ideology and allow it to represent them" (Ott & Mack, p. 129). However, rather than see themselves as summoned towards a particular identity, individuals "understand themselves to be the source rather than the effect of that summons" (Britzman, 2003, p. 223). Although individuals have the choice to reject or accept this call, they are "always-already interpellated" or "summoned" into a specific role (Althusser, 2001, p. 119). Colorblind ideology, for example has the power to interpellate White individuals into a racialized landscape that defines them as "real" Americans whose cultural perspectives represent the *Gold Standard* of moral superiority, hard work, cultural expression, fiscal responsibility, and political acumen. In other words, "whiteness functions as the transcendental norm, as that which defines nonwhites as 'different' or 'deviant' while it, whiteness, remains the same" (Yancey, 2012, p. 164). In contrast, African American subjects are often hailed as immoral, violent, angry, lazy, or in need of help.

Identity and *ideological stance* have a reciprocal relationship with *teacher identity*, which is represented by a double-arrowed curved line located on the left side of the figure. For this study, teacher identity as defined as the way a teacher understands and defines herself within the professional context of schools. Like one's personal identity, *teacher identity* is influenced by the dominant ideologies and accompanying cultural myths embedded within a particular society regarding what it means to be a good teacher (Britzman, 2003). For example, many pre-service White teachers are "hailed" by an ideology that defines White teachers as the "savoirs" of urban students of color. This ideological message is often conveyed through popular teacher films such as *Freedom Writers* or *The Ron Clark Story,* which tell the stories of White teachers who transform the educational lives of inner-city youth of color. Such media texts portray White teachers are selfless "saviors" and students of color as urban miscreants who need to be "saved." White preservice teachers who internalize this message often define as themselves as "good" people who are answering a call to serve.

Identity, Ideological Stance, and Teacher Identity's Role in Answering Research Questions

Through analysis of the data, it became apparent that Megan's teacher identity was linked to her own personal identity as a former special education student who overcame academic struggles through parental support and hard work. In turn,

this identity was linked to an ideological stance rooted in a desire to "help" urban students and shaped by several assumptions. First, Megan believed that, like her, her students' academic struggles could be overcome with hard work and "proper support." Second, she held that all children could succeed and, as a result, "deserved" to be provided with an equal opportunity to learn. Third, rather than see her students as pathological or deficient, Megan viewed student problems as puzzles that had to be solved by the teacher. However, Megan's personal and professional identities were interpellated through an ideological stance rooted in colorblindness, which made it difficult for her to acknowledge the importance of race in shaping the identities of her students:

> I don't really think about [the race of my students] unless I have to think about it. Like multicultural literature and trying to include that kind of stuff…I'm trying to think about curriculum, but I'm also thinking about who my students are and trying to cater to their needs culturally—but specifically racially I'm not—I don't really think about it that much.

Megan also appeared unable to recognize how her own racial identity as a White woman may have provided her with social and economic privileges that were not always available to her students:

> I'm White that's who I am and there's nothing I can do to change it. I don't, I mean, everything that I have—like where I live, what I have—I don't feel I got that because I was White. I feel like I got that because I worked my ass off and my parents worked their asses off. And granted I started at a completely different playing field [when compared to] some of my students in that I had a great home and I had supportive parents. But where I am right now—I'm here because I worked hard. I don't think it's because I'm—maybe it is because I'm White, but I don't believe it's because I'm White.

It is clear from this excerpt that Megan attributed her personal, academic, and professional success to her parents' and her own hard work and personal merit—not to long-standing institutional and social policies that have consistently benefitted White people at the expense of people of color.

By identifying the *ideological stance, identity*, and *teacher identity* embedded within Megan's *racial geography of teaching*, it was possible to learn more about the ways that her *ideological stance* informed her *construction of race*. For example, Megan's resistance to acknowledging the role that race played in shaping her own personal and professional identities, as well as those of her students of color suggested that her *ideological stance* was rooted in colorblindness or color-evasion. Rather than viewing identity through a sociocultural lens of White privilege, she believed that her success resulted in hard work and individual merit. All of this suggests that a powerful component of Megan's *construction of race* was rooted in not "seeing" race.

It is important to note that, although it appeared that Megan did not "see" race,

there were times when she *did* see it and it caused her to feel uneasy, particularly in regard to her professional identity. According to Megan, when she first began teaching in an urban school, she felt like she was doing a good thing by helping "underprivileged" children:

> I think when I first started teaching I was there to like save—not save the world—but I felt as though I was doing this really good thing for, you know, underprivileged children and trying to help them.

However, during her first few years of her professional practice, she began to feel increasing discomfort with this position and, as noted in the excerpt above, was very concerned that parents not see her as someone who believed she could "save" urban students. For Megan, this tension, which, as will be discussed in more detail below, informed her construction of race, represented an inner struggle centered on how it might be possible her to "help" her urban students achieve without taking on the role of "savior."

Discursive Dimensions:
Discursive Repertoires and The Construction of Race

Immediately below *identity* and *ideological stance* and connected by a set of double arrows is a set of two additional interconnected discursive dimensions: *discursive repertoires* and *construction of race.* According to Frankenberg (1993), "[d]iscursive repertoires may reinforce, contradict, conceal, explain, or 'explain away' the materiality or the history of a given situation" (p. 2). Although there are many different discursive practices associated with race (for a more detailed discussion of different ideologies, paradigms, and discourse see Frankenberg, 1993 and Omi & Winant, 2014), the example of Megan's racial geography focuses on the discursive repertoire of colorblindness.

Colorblindness, which many scholars argue is the dominant contemporary racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Omi & Winant, 2014), supports a discursive repertoire rooted within the assumption that the problem of racism was "solved" through the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s. This means that "overt forms of discrimination are a thing of the past, and the United States is in the midst of a 'post-racial' society" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 257) where race holds little significance. Colorblind discourses structure the racial ethos of the United States in several ways. First, they limit the definition of racism to the overt actions of racist individuals like White supremacists or "misguided Black (sic) militants like Al Sharpton who overdramatize White racism and White apologists who have a pathological need to feel guilty" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 7). Colorblindness also works to normalize Whiteness as the neutral standard to which all other racial groups must aspire to in order to be successful. This has the effect of "erasing the cultural contributions, perspectives, and experiences of people from other racial groups"

(Bell, 2002, p. 239) at the same time it privileges White citizens by maintaining White power structures.

Discursive repertoires also "ha[ve] a material existence" (Althusser, 2001, p. 112) in that each "produce[es] material effects" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 49). We can see the material effect of colorblind ideology embedded within the construction of the K-12 public school curriculum, which claims cultural neutrality, but actually represents "a particular form of cultural reproduction which endorses, models, and transmits Eurocentric cultural values and ignores or denigrates other cultural heritages" (Gay, 1995, pp. 164-165). In other words, material and discursive dimensions have a dialectical relationship in that one is shaped and influenced by the other (Frankenberg, 1993). One purpose of the *racial geography of teaching* framework is to make sense of the complex relationship found between and among the material and discursive aspects of ideology, particularly in regard to the racial attitudes of White teachers.

The purpose of the *discursive repertoire* dimension, which is located to the right of the entire figure and connected to the *construction of race* with an arrow, is to provide a means of understanding the degree to which study participants perceived, comprehended, and appreciated the historical, social, and structural aspects of race, racism, and the construction of Whiteness. For example, if a teacher interprets her world through a discursive repertoire of Western colonialism, it is very likely that she believes that the Western canon should be the curricular focus of K-12 education. The material effect of this repertoire might be the underrepresentation or outright omission of the important contributions made African Americans, Asian Americans, or Hispanic Americans within this teacher's classroom.

Accompanying *discursive repertoires*, is a second dimension referred to as the *construction of race*. This dimension is made up of conflicting discursive repertoires regarding race, racism, and Whiteness that each participant engaged in throughout her personal and professional life. Thus, the *construction of race,* which is directly influenced by specific discursive repertoires, is comprised of tensions between conflicting repertoires.

Discursive Repertories and the Construction of Race's Role in Answering the Research Questions

In the case of Megan, she interpreted race through a series of *discursive repertoires* rooted in an attempt "not" to see race: colorblindness, silence, and color evasion (Frankenberg, 1993). This did not mean, as noted above, that Megan did not see race in a literal sense, but rather, when confronted with race, she appeared to work to resist, evade or avoid the topic all together. As a result, Megan's *construction of race* was comprised of two sets of highly complex and contradictory tensions rooted in a struggle between acknowledging and not acknowledging race. The first of these discursive tensions was "seeing and not seeing race." Instead of

"seeing" her students as having a racial identity, Megan often saw them through a special education lens in which she drew on her own experiences as a student who received special education services and her role as a special educator. However, at the same time she did not "see" her students' race, she was acutely aware of the racial identification of her students' parents:

> I feel like I have to like kind of frontload my introduction to [parents of color] in that I really overdo it that I'm not this, 'save-the-world-person' and that I'm really here for [their] kids. I don't care what color they are—I'm here to help them. Well, I do care—you know what I mean…but I'm not judging them… I've really tried to, you know, [make] phone calls and get parents in to meet them so that they know who I am. Because I do fear that a parent may accuse me of being racist, or of not treating his or her child fairly because of the color of his or her skin.

When Megan "saw" the racial difference between herself and her parents of color, she became self-conscious and attempted to evade any racial tension by "frontloading" her communication, so parents know that she isn't "judging them."

The second set of discursive tensions, "being silent or developing a voice about race," was situated within the tension Megan experienced between her extended family's attitudes and her own evolving views of race as a prospective and practicing teacher. For instance, from her pre-practicum experiences within an urban context and some of her university-based coursework, Megan began to construct a discourse around race that subscribed to the idea that all children, no matter what color, "deserved to be on an equal playing field." However, Megan reported that some of her family did not share this same belief and often made racist and classist remarks:

> If I were to tell a story about Marcus throwing a chair or something, I'm sure that—I know that there would be some comment. Not that he has a crazy life. Not that he has a disability or something like that. It would be because he's a Black child that's why he assaulted you or something to do with that. So, I don't ever talk about my job in front of my mother's side of the family… I don't know why but it's just the way they were brought up, I guess.

Rather than confront these family members, with whom she felt very close, Megan chose to remain silent.

Mapping out this portion of Megan's racial geography confirmed that Megan negotiated almost all aspect of race through a colorblindness ideology. However, rather than allow her to be unaware of race, it appeared that, at times, colorblindness was employed as a protective buffer that kept racial issues at arm's length and allowed Megan to avoid potentially challenging confrontations with parents of color and some members of her own family.

Teaching Practice

The final dimension of Figure 1 is *teaching practice*, which is located at the very bottom of the figure and is connected to the *construction of race* by a double

arrow. Double arrows also connect teacher identity to the dimensions of *identity, ideological stance*, and *teacher identity.* All of the material and discursive dimensions that comprise the *racial geography of teaching* lead to this final dimension. Consequently, *teaching practice* is equally comprised of both the material and discursive. Its materiality is rooted within the fact that teaching practice takes place within a specific contextual space and time and results in a concrete outcome related to student learning. It is also discursive in that it is shaped by the development of each teacher's *identity* and *ideological stance* along with one's *construction of race*. *Teaching practice* is not only influenced by all of the other material and discursive dimensions; it also, in turn, influences and shapes several other dimensional aspects. In particular, the interactions and experiences that take place within teaching practice directly influence the discursive dimensions represented. This means that teaching practice has a direct influence on the types of discursive tensions found within the *construction of race*. It also influences *identity* and *ideological stance* and has the potential to change and alter *discursive repertoires*.

Teaching Practice's Role in Answering the Research Question

In unpacking this final dimension, I was able to uncover two ways that Megan's *ideological stance and constructions of race influenced her teaching practice.* First, without realizing it, Megan would, on some occasions, not acknowledge important racial themes when it was clearly appropriate to do so. For example, during a participant observation session, I observed Megan reading aloud a book entitled *Flossie and the Fox* (McKissack & Isadora, 1986). This book tells the Southern African American story of an African American girl who outmaneuvers a felonious fox.

After a few moments of reading the text, it became clear that Megan was having difficulty reading the Southern African American dialect. At one point, she stops reading and asked the class, "Why am I having difficulty reading this?" She then tells the children that the reason she is having difficulty reading the text is because the book is written in a Southern dialect. She talks about how Mr. Martin, who is her student teacher, speaks differently from her because he is from the South and she is from the North.

Here, Megan told her students that the difficulty she had reading the text had to do with the fact that it was written in a Southern dialect, and since she is from the Northern part of the country, it was hard for her to read it out loud. However, what she did not acknowledge was that this dialect could also be described as African American. Given the fact that the illustrations depict a young African American girl, it was even more intriguing that Megan omitted this fact from her discussion with the students. It was also interesting that Megan neglected to acknowledge the fact that Mr. Martin was African American. It would appear then that, in this particular incident, Megan's colorblindness not only prevented her

from fully embracing the racial aspects of the text, but also from seeing herself or her student teacher as raced.

The second way that Megan's ideological stance and construction of race influenced her teaching occurred when she "saw" race, but made a conscious effort to suppress or mute the topic among her students:

> Again, I think that there are ways that in like past classes [conversations about race were] doable, but with the group I have this year, I don't think that it's really possible…You know, I have this handful of kids that are just defiant…I wouldn't want [a conversation] to turn into something that it's not supposed to be…I wouldn't want children to feel uncomfortable or offended in anyway. For that sake, I try not to specifically talk about it…And I don't think that they're mature enough—some of them are mature enough to handle it in that type of setting—in that whole group setting—maybe in small groups, if I were to pull a few of them for lunch or out on the playground or something.

Mica Pollock (2004) refers to the suppression or muting of racial topics as *colormuteness*. She argues that, in terms of race, what is said is just as important as what is not said and that silence about a particular racial problem does not make it disappear. Instead, she argues:

> Silence about [racial] patterns, of course, allows them to remain intact: Racial patterns do not go away simply because they are ignored. Indeed, once people have *noticed* racial patterns, they seem to become engraved on the brain. They become, most dangerously, acceptable—a taken-for-granted part of what school is about. (2001, p. 9)

The tensions that comprised Megan's construction of race not only caused her to avoid talking about the meaning of race and racism within her teaching practice, but also had the potential of maintaining racial patterns within her classroom and school community at-large. For example, while "frontloading" communication with parents of color *may* have insulated Megan from being identified as a racist, consciously avoiding the topic of race may have made it difficult for her to recognize when a legitimate racial issue affected one or all of her students. In the end Megan's ideological stance and construction of race made is difficult for her challenge her own assumptions about race or understand how race shaped the experiences of her students of color. As a result, Megan was unable to gain a complete picture of herself or her students of color.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, a theoretical framework represents a specific theoretical perspective and is usually determined before a research project begins. It provides a guide for the design and implementation of a particular investigation. In contrast, the construction of a conceptual framework, which can be developed before, during, or at the end of a study, is built from *all* aspects of a research project

including, but not limited to, the problem statement, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, interpretation, and the final report of findings.

The purpose of the article presented here was to describe how I constructed a conceptual framework called the *racial geography of teaching,* as well as provide an example of how it was used to uncover the ways that the ideological assumptions for *one* of two White teachers shaped her construction of race, and what this construction meant in terms of her teaching practice. In mapping the *racial geography of teaching* for this one participant, it became clear that her construction of race was filtered through an ideological stance rooted in colorblindness and color-avoidance. As a result, she worked hard to avoid talking about the meaning of race and racism within her teaching practice.

The purpose of this article is not to suggest that the story of one White teacher's *racial geography of teaching* is generalizable to the entire population of White teachers working in the United States. Instead, I am arguing that, given the ever-widening demographic gap between a majority-White teaching force and an increasingly diverse K-12 student population, it is crucial that critically-oriented researchers develop new conceptual and theoretical frameworks that allow them to investigate this phenomenon more deeply. The *racial geography of teaching* provides one such framework—a framework that I will continue to build upon and use as a means of interpreting how the culturally embedded ideological assumptions of other White teachers shape their constructions of race and what these constructions mean in terms of each new participant's individual teaching practice. The investigation of more cases will not only increase the generalizability and external validity of what the framework uncovers (Merriam, 1998), but also, more importantly, build a new theory or set of theories that address the role that race plays in shaping the teaching practices of White teachers.

Note

[1] Participant's name, the names of students, city of employment, location and name of school, and community of origin are indicated by pseudonyms.

References

Althusser, L. (2001). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Banks, J. A. & Banks, C. A. M. (2013). *Multicultural perspectives: Issues and perspectives,* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.

Bell, L. A. (2002). Sincere fictions: The pedagogical challenges of preparing White teachers for multicultural classrooms. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(3), 236-244.

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013). *Racism without racists: Colorblind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States (Fourth Edition)*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Britzman, D. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Brown, M.K., Carnoy, M., Currie, E., Duster, T., Oppenheimer, D.B., Schultz, M., & Wellman, D. *Whitewashing race: The myth of a colorblind society*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Carter, R. T. (1997). Is White a race? Expressions of White racial identity. In M. Fine, L. Weiss, L. C. Powell, & L. M. Wong (Eds.), *Off White: Readings on race, power, and society* (pp. 198-209). New York, NY: Routledge.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *The handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The social construction of White women, Whiteness race matters*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Galindo, R. (1999). Language wars: The ideological dimensions of the debates on bilingual education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *21*(2), 103-141.

Gay, G. (1995). Mirror images on common issues: Parallels between multicultural education and critical pedagogy. In C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 155-189). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Green, H. (2014). Use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(6), 34-38.

Imenda, S. (2014). Is there a conceptual difference between theoretical and conceptual frameworks? *Journal of Social Science*, 38(2), 185-195.

Leonardo, Z. (2013). *Race frameworks: A multidimensional theory of racism and education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Madison, D.S. (2005). *Critical ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications.

McKissack, P. (1986). *Flossie and the fox*. New York, New York: Dial Books.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s, Third Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ott, B.L. & Mack, R.L. (2009). *Critical media studies: An introduction*. New York: NY: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pollock, M. (2001). How the question we ask most about race in education is the very question we most suppress. *Educational Researcher*, 30(9), 2-12.

Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Quantz, R., & O'Connor, G. (1988). Writing critical ethnography: Dialogue, multivoicedness and carnival of cultural texts. *Educational Theory*, 38 (1), pp. 95-109.

Rathert,, C. Williams, E.S., & Lawrence, E.R. (2012). Emotional exhaustion and workarounds in acute care: Cross sectional tests of a theoretical framework. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 49(8), 969-977.

Ravitch, S.M., & Riggian, M. (2017). *Reason and rigor: How conceptual frameworks guide research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Rodgers, C.R., & Scott, K.H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. E. Demers, *The handbook of research on teacher education* (3rd ed.) (pp. 732-755). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor, & Francis Group.

Rousmaniere, K. (2001). White silence: A racial biography of Margaret Haley. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *34*(2), 7-15.

Yancey, G. (2012). *Look a White! Philosophical essays on Whiteness*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.