

Trading Stories: Middle-Class White Women Teachers and the Creation of Collective Narratives about Students and Families in a Diverse Elementary School

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Background/Context: *Collaboration is increasingly part of teachers' professional learning and continuous improvement of teaching practice. However, there is little exploration of how teachers' racial, gender, and social class identities influence their collaboration with colleagues and, in turn, their teaching and professional learning.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *This study examines shared meanings that are constructed through storytelling by middle-class White women teachers who work in a racially and socioeconomically diverse elementary school I call Fields Elementary. I ask: What narrative tropes do middle-class White women teachers draw upon to create common understanding about what it means to teach at their school? In what ways does a normative middle-class White culture, specifically related to White womanhood, achieve ideological projects through teachers' participation in collective storytelling in professional communities? The article proposes conceptual connections across whiteness, intersectionality, professional learning, and collective storytelling, and provides an empirical example of how the integration of perspectives illuminates this type of complex interaction.*

Research Design: *Utilizing ethnographic methods of data collection, I spent 5 months at Fields Elementary, dividing my time between two focal teachers, both middle-class White women. I followed these teachers across settings and responsibilities. The data in this critical discourse analysis are drawn from this larger study and come from a conversation in one teacher community (the second-grade team). On completion of preliminary data analysis, focal teachers reflected on findings to enrich interpretations.*

Findings/Results: *Findings indicate that this teacher community co-constructed narratives reproducing social locations as middle-class White women. Their professional knowledge reflected ambiguity in their efficacy to teach for equitable outcomes. In addition, their professional knowledge was tied to their identities as mothers; narratives reflected middle-class White social distance from students and families, which included asserting teachers' moral superiority in parenting.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *This study provides a model for conceptualizing collective storytelling and professional learning among teachers from an intersectionality perspective on whiteness. Empirical findings suggest that institutional constraints of teaching may require*

interventions at multiple levels: teachers' and leaders' learning how to facilitate professional conversations; home visits intended for "funds of knowledge" professional learning opportunities; hiring and placement of diverse faculty and school leaders to extend construction of professional knowledge; and policy changes. These considerations have implications for teachers' professionalization and for schooling experiences that dehumanize students of color and students living in poverty.

Teachers tell stories. In the hallway, in the staff lounge, and in team meetings, teachers tell stories about their day and their students. Through storytelling, teachers enact several roles: support figures, counselors, confidantes. Often teachers tell stories in response to hearing stories from colleagues; the back-and-forth trading of stories establishes a shared evidence base that helps teachers make sense of, and perhaps release stress related to, their experiences (Mawhinney, 2008a, 2008b; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Scott, 1991). The shared evidence base created by trading stories also constructs and maintains a narrative about students and their families.

This article examines such collective storytelling within one grade-level team of middle-class White women teachers at a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse elementary school in a working class and low-income community, which I call Fields Elementary (all names of people and places are pseudonyms). I seek to understand what one particular conversation can reveal about the ways in which the social locations of a team of middle-class White women teachers are meaningful and how dominant race, class, and gender norms are reproduced in stories—resulting in a middle-class, White-centered school culture and professional repertoire.

To examine storytelling among a group of middle-class White women teachers who teach at Fields Elementary, I ask: First, what are the narrative tropes that middle-class White women teachers draw upon to create common language or understanding about what it means to teach at their school, and how does this narrative unfold? Second, in what ways does a normative middle-class White culture, specifically related to White womanhood, achieve ideological projects through the ways in which teachers participate in collective storytelling in professional communities?

To address these questions, this article proceeds in two parts. First, I elaborate a literature-based framework to connect ideas on how professional learning is a racialized, classed, and gendered process—power laden, not value neutral, and with contradictions and tensions. In this endeavor, I am making explicit connections that have been implicit or not engaged in many examinations of professional learning in teacher communities that take a situated perspective of learning. I propose that professional learning does not just address content and pedagogy but also comprises professional knowledge that is intimately connected to racialized discourses and other social practices. As

such, I broaden the “social context” of social practices and knowledge construction in informal professional learning. This approach also extends concerns about equity to broader terms of engagement in addition to equity in student achievement, which itself remains an urgent challenge.

Second, I use the proposed framework to explore an empirical example of teachers’ discourse and professional learning in communities. This empirical example and the following discussion deepen the framework from a “worldview” grain size to an emerging conceptualization of specific discursive moves that engage and reify middle-class White womanhood in teaching. The analysis of an actual conversation also illustrates how a collective narrative, comprising both personal experiences and stereotypes, reinforced by multiple retellings from multiple subjects, becomes a “truth” in the school that exists despite the varying stories, experiences, and beliefs of individual teachers.

Importantly, this article does not seek to define “middle-class White womanhood” as a static or monolithic phenomenon, but rather how it *can* function and *has* functioned in different ways in the domains of teacher collaboration and teacher professionalization. I focus on dynamics of middle-class White womanhood in these teachers’ collective storytelling because narratives stake claims on who storytellers are as well as assert the way their worlds are or should be. That is, when teachers tell each other stories, they are defining themselves, their workplace, and the characters in their stories (generally students and families); these definitions offer a complex view into how middle-class White womanhood is implicated in teaching and teacher communities.

Nor does this analysis take storytelling or narratives to *solely* reflect race, class, and gender. However, these are often overlooked aspects of professional conversation in teacher communities and thus are the focus of this analysis. Storytelling and narratives reflect individual and social dynamics and can function to constrain or expand boundaries of thinking and being. For example, when stories present “eye-opening” experiences that have changed perceptions or mental models (for either teller or audience), storytelling can be a transformative experience; but, just as possible, stories can perpetuate traditional or dominant beliefs and assumptions, values, and emotions. The effects of the latter kind of storytelling can be dire in schools serving predominantly students of color and low-income communities—when White middle-class teachers take part in the injustice of seeing students and families of color not as people or learners but as tropes of delinquency or pathology. These stories, both directly and indirectly related to discussion of student achievement, can inform the organizational climate as shared stories become collective knowledge through the co-constructed definition of what it means to teach at the school.

UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE STORYTELLING FROM AN INTERSECTIONALITY PERSPECTIVE ON MIDDLE- CLASS WHITE WOMANHOOD

To interrogate power in stories and storytelling, I have connected disparate literatures—previously not in “conversation”—to highlight the role of storytelling by middle-class White women in the professional learning of teacher communities. This framework integrates three primary lenses to interpret the subtlety of power relations and ideology in collective storytelling among middle-class White women teachers.

First, I utilize theories on whiteness and intersectionality of race, class, and gender in theory and in teaching. Second, I draw on conceptualizations of narratives and storytelling, particularly as a collective, identity-building endeavor that creates social meaning. Finally, I focus on one particular setting for storytelling by drawing from ideas about collective learning, meaning-making, and identity in teacher communities. For each set of ideas, I weave in empirical literature that illustrates the major concepts.

When putting these three lenses together, I am able to interrogate storytelling in teacher communities as racialized, gendered, and classed instances of professional learning and meaning-making that are inextricable from the social context of the teacher community, the school, and the teachers’ identities as middle-class White women. I take this approach because when storytellers are people in power who do not recognize or reflect on their power, stories are told and have the potential to be heard as unremarkable truth, loaded with ideologies of racial supremacy and social class hierarchy (Dyer, 1997; Minh-ha, 1993/2004; Morrison, 1992; Yoon, 2012). The unrecognized power of the storyteller over the character is problematized here because “power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (Adichie, 2009). These definitive representations of people are static portrayals—and, as a single story transmits and constructs knowledge, a universal statement about a group of people (i.e., a stereotype) emerges. Stories of the marginalized told by people with power or authority rob people of their voices and, Adichie explained, “The consequence of the single story is this: it robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult” (Adichie, 2009). People in the stories become symbols that, by implicit comparison, reify the invisible superiority of middle-class White norms and ideologies (Dyer, 1997; Minh-ha, 1993/2004).

CRITICAL WHITENESS PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOLING AND LEARNING

Identifying whiteness dynamics has roots in a broader set of race studies, such as critical race theory (e.g., Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Studies applying critical race theory in education have proliferated since Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) initial steps to create a framework to do so. Critical whiteness studies, like critical race studies, is a broad and interdisciplinary body of work that has continued to grow in educational research. Critical whiteness studies stems from the work of critical race scholars, turning the gaze of race studies to include naming and dismantling dominant ideologies of whiteness. This analysis is informed by a set of studies that use a critical whiteness perspective to extrapolate the meaning of whiteness in schooling and classroom teaching.

Whiteness, like race at large, is a social construction of policy, law, popular culture, and discourse; that is, whiteness is not biologically meaningful but is socially, materially, and politically so (Frankenberg, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1986). Whiteness has multiple dimensions. Whiteness is not just the identity of individuals who are perceived as White. Whiteness is an ideology that positions White people with privileged access to political power and material wealth (Fine, 2004; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Lipsitz, 1998; Mills, 1997; Roediger, 2007). Whiteness is also a cultural ideology comprising beliefs that position White people as aesthetically and morally valuable and good, particularly when related to White womanhood (Aanerud, 1997; Dyer, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Rogin, 1987). Therefore, whiteness becomes the normative ideal in language, media imagery, and individuals' beliefs or assumptions about humanness (Dyer, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 1997; Morrison, 1992). It is the embodiment of power because of this normative position: "The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity" (Dyer, 1997, p. 2).

Humanity and evaluations of morality often occur together (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014). Defining humanity as White creates implicit connections of whiteness to goodness and middle-class socio-economic status. White middle-class humanity constructs communities of color, in comparison, as pathologically unsafe, criminalized, and crowded rather than attending to structural effects of marginalization (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Lipsitz, 2011). Deracialized code words such as "urban" and "inner city" are used to conjure racialized and classed images of danger and instability, from the community level to family structure (Reay, 2007). In these ways—politically, culturally, materially, and ideologically—whiteness is historically situated and described in deracialized terms that connect race with social class, culture, language, and nation.

Deracialized language often renders whiteness invisible to those who benefit from it (Dyer, 1997; Lipsitz, 1998). People who benefit from whiteness and power can choose when or when not to see or notice them depending on their emotional and psychological comfort, a practice that Frankenberg (1993) called “power evasive” or “color evasive.” Bonilla-Silva (2006) also noted “Whites’ avoidance of direct racial language” in order to work around the public disavowal of racism (p. 54). Similarly, Pollock (2004) examined a phenomenon documented in racially diverse schools that she called being “colormute,” when people selectively name race and racism depending on context—topic, physical location, age, authority status (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This selectivity reveals a moral, ideological, and discursive incoherence in whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Mills, 1997; Pollock, 2004; Yoon, 2012).

Intersectionality of Race, Class, and Gender

Race and racialization are in reflexive relationship to social class and gender through normative ways related to thinking, being, and perceiving in the world. In recognition of these complexities, I have directed attention to the *intersections* of race, class, or gender (e.g., Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981; Frankenberg, 1993; The Combahee River Collective, 1977). Intersectionality studies reject monolithic definitions of groups and highlight effects of overlapping social locations on marginalization (Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). An intersectionality perspective explicitly acknowledges agency and power in lived experiences and the construction of knowledge (Collins, 2009). In particular, women of color have claimed race, gender, social class, and sexuality as interwoven and as causes for solidarity in response to multiple marginalization. In educational research, scholars using an intersectionality lens have explored the schooling experiences of being both Black and female (Fordham, 1993; Lei, 2003; Morris, 2007); being low-income, Asian American, and male (S. J. Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003); being Black and motivated to achieve in mathematics (Martin, 2006); and being White and working class or White and middle class (Reay, 2007, 2008).

Diverging from the multiple marginalization in original intersectionality research and theory, intersectionality has begun to evolve into generally signaling the complexity of multiple, overlapping social and political locations, both oppressed and privileged, such as sexuality, gender, social class, education, language, and nationality (e.g., Frankenberg, 1993; Lareau, 2003; S. J. Lee, 2005; Reay, 2008; Weis, 2008). Middle-class White womanhood, with both gender oppression and racial and social class power, is an example of this expansion of intersectionality.

Middle-Class White Womanhood in Teaching

In education literature, White teachers have been represented as a monolithic group whose members have static racial perceptions (Philip, 2011). An intersectionality approach complicates the category of “White teacher” by examining the whiteness of teaching identities as inseparable from a middle-class whiteness, which is also influenced by the gendered dimension that most teachers in the social context of elementary schools are White women. Currently, U.S. public school teachers are still overwhelmingly middle-class White women; approximately 85.8% of elementary school teachers in the United States are White, and 84.8% are women (Coopersmith & Gruber, 2009).

The demographic characteristics of teachers are important not only because of the enduring roles of race, social class, and gender in the structuring of opportunity and belonging in U.S. society, but also because middle-class White women, particularly when teaching low-income students or students of color, have historically played a role in assimilating colonized peoples (Deutsch, 1987; Lomawaima, 1994; Ware, 1992). This assimilation functions through dynamics of mothering, civilizing, and socializing children of color—and often their mothers—into a middle-class White society’s norms, morals and values, and ideology (Deutsch, 1987; Lightfoot, 1978; Thompson, 1997; Ware, 1992). White women have been idealized and limited to the home by the rationale that women have natural powers to nurture morality and guide socialization, as evidenced by mothering. It is on this basis that they initially were considered ideal teachers for young children—after men started leaving the teaching profession, and even though early women teachers were young White women who were not mothers (Lightfoot, 1978; Thompson, 1997). Middle-class White womanhood is historically and socially meaningful in teaching.

NARRATIVES AND COLLECTIVE STORYTELLING

An intersectionality perspective on middle-class White womanhood in teaching affords tools to interpret storytelling, which is the central vehicle for creating meaning in this framework. When telling stories, individuals implicitly describe their identities and the ways in which they see the world. The storyteller’s language and the audience’s responses indicate the degree of shared or contested assumptions about values, cultural symbols, knowledge, memory, and beliefs (Lakoff, 2004; Ochs & Capps, 2001). Thus, stories hint at ideologies that are both dominant in the setting and held by the individual speaking (Ochs & Capps, 1997). When groups or pairs of individuals tell stories to each other, each person contributes to

the story, perhaps by asking questions, making sounds of approval or dismay, or adding details the primary storyteller has missed. Some conversation partners may respond to hearing a story with telling stories of their own. The outcome, as Ochs and Capps (2001) described, is the creative process of a social framework:

Under these circumstances, the activity of narrating with a family member, friend, neighbor, or perhaps a healer serves as a prosaic social arena for *developing frameworks for understanding events*. Narrative activity becomes a tool for collaboratively reflecting upon specific situations and *their place in the general scheme of life*. In essays of this sort, the content and direction that narrative framings take are contingent upon the *narrative input of other interlocutors*, who provide, elicit, criticize, refute, and draw inferences from facets of the unfolding account. In these exchanges, narrative becomes an *interactional achievement* and interlocutors become co-authors. (pp. 2–3, emphases added)

Though described in the context of children’s participation in family conversations around the dinner table, Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, and Smith (1992) described collective storytelling conversations as a “resource for . . . intellectual development” in both “sociocognitive and sociolinguistic” ways (p. 38).

Adults also learn to participate in multiple discourse communities by telling and listening to stories in different settings and groups. Coauthoring narratives through collective storytelling is one form of learning in groups that have a meaningful shared identity, such as teacher communities. Narratives are an essential component in the constitution of organizational belonging, history, and norms in professional communities such as those created for teacher learning and collaboration (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Horn, 2007; Ochs & Capps, 1997; Wenger, 1998). Although there are multiple dimensions of professional identity and belonging in a teacher community, this analysis focuses on the identity, history, norms, and knowledge of middle-class White womanhood.

Narratives and collective storytelling also function to construct the terms of social reality by relying on the presumed truth and authority of personal experience. Stories that are told even second-hand or third-hand wield the power of personal experience and the authority of shared memory. Narratives hold such collective power because stories connect individual experience to shared truth by way of language that makes use of ideological resources. Scott (1991) explained that experience, and the linguistic sharing of experience with others (i.e., trading stories), defines humans and the world through the contextualized, social learning process of discourse:

Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience can both confirm what is already known (we see what we have learned to see) and upset what has been taken for granted (when different meanings are in conflict we re-adjust our vision . . . that is what is meant by “learning from experience,” though not everyone learns the same lesson or learns it at the same time or in the same way). (p. 793)

Scott’s interrogation of “experience,” particularly in reference to the social creation of knowledge, frames experience as a reflexive and discursive process that is historically and socially situated. This definition problematizes the authority of experience in trading stories that are told only from dominant perspectives of middle-class White women teachers. Collective narratives, and the ways in which members of the group make sense of them, are not power neutral (Foucault, 1975/1995; Mumby, 1987; Ochs & Capps, 1997). Narratives “not only evolve as a product of certain power structures, but also function ideologically to produce, maintain, and reproduce those power structures” (Mumby, 1987, p. 113).

PARTICIPATION AND LEARNING IN TEACHER COMMUNITIES

One setting for the construction of middle-class White womanhood through collective storytelling is the teacher community. Teacher communities are small groups of colleagues who collaborate on professional tasks and professional learning, with different degrees of formality and structure (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Horn, 2005, 2010; Little, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Professional communities are also sites of creating shared professional identities for the group (Wenger, 1998). When teachers collectively participate in telling stories about students or families, they implicitly define themselves and their work.

The narrative progression of participation in a collective conversation is significant because it has the potential to limit or open up the boundaries of participation in professional learning and shared meaning. Along with some others interested in professional learning in (teacher) communities, I analyze conversations, or episodes of interaction, because I am interested in the discursive moves—the meanings and functions of speech and action—of collective storytelling that reifies, challenges, or bends the rules of the social order in a school (Fairclough, 2001). In addition to interpreting the actual words that are spoken, some examples of discursive moves include pauses, talking over another person, laughter, volume and intonation, and repetition of words or phrases.

Attention to these discursive moves reflects how studies of professional learning in teacher communities are usually situated in sociocultural

ideas of organizational learning, or how collectives and their members learn through participation in shared meaning-making in historical, cultural, and relational context. Boreham and Morgan (2004) and Wenger (1998) asserted that dialogue is the primary medium for organizational learning, which occurs through processes such as “opening space for the creation of shared meaning,” “reconstituting power relations,” and “providing cultural tools to mediate learning” (Boreham & Morgan, 2004, p. 315). Dialogue is the primary vehicle for individual and collective learning because dialogue is relational—individuals and their knowledge are positioned in relation to others. Thus, conversations are collective acts of constructing beliefs and identities, whether agreed upon or debated. The nature of work is constructed in communities as a *joint enterprise*—an implicit definition of “what we do here”—that is based on collective participation and shared identity (Wenger, 1998).

My approach to teachers’ learning in professional communities in this analysis diverges somewhat from the existing literature, which explores both community formation and development of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, because I approach learning that occurs as a conservative process, revealing existing organizational norms and assumptions. In contrast, studies of collaborative professional learning tend to focus on transformation of organizational culture and shared meaning-making (e.g., Brown & Duguid, 1991). This orientation in the educational literature exists despite value-neutral theories of collective learning processes (e.g., Wenger, 1998). In addition, Boreham and Morgan (2004) pointed out Bakhtin’s assertion that dialogue, while a vehicle for learning and creation of shared meaning, can also be a vehicle for conflict and disintegration. Learning can just as easily be a process of developing an organizational culture that shuts down potentially “expansive” learning (recognition of organizational contradictions and consequent collective efforts for transformation) for the sake of “stabilization” knowledge, which can protect boundaries, categories, and preexisting narratives (Engeström, 1987, 2007). In this way, collective storytelling in teacher communities has consequences for shared knowledge and professional identity related to racialized, classed, and gendered norms of morality and belonging (Ochs & Capps, 1997, 2001).

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The analysis and data presented next come from a larger qualitative case study conducted using ethnographic data collection strategies over roughly 5 months. The larger study followed 2 teachers and 3 grade-level teams in a racially and ethnically diverse elementary school that I call Fields

Elementary. I immersed myself in the school and in the 2 teachers' professional lives as deeply as possible; as a result, I spent an average of 20 hours per week with the teachers and their students and colleagues. This immersive approach of building relationships and deeply contextualized observations over time provides access to a "thick description" that moves between understanding participants on their terms and a critical analysis of power and ideology such as middle-class White womanhood in classroom teaching (Geertz, 1973; Glesne, 2010; Rosaldo, 1987; Smith, 1999).

STUDY SITE AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF PARTICIPANTS

Situated just outside a major U.S. city in the Pacific Northwest, Fields Elementary and its school district have seen major demographic shifts over the past decade. The school district is growing, primarily among Latino/a and Asian/Pacific Islander communities, while the White population steadily declines. I chose Fields Elementary and its school district for their representation of this phenomenon: urbanizing, racially diverse, and working-class to low-income suburbs of a major city undergoing demographic change, evident in schools that formerly served middle- and working-class, predominantly White communities (Evans, 2007). This pattern of demographic change is one that is occurring across the United States, particularly in expanding metropolitan areas (Frey, 2011), which makes this case illustrative for application to other settings (Merriam, 1998).

With this growth, Fields Elementary and other schools in its district are increasingly segregated by race and ethnicity, social class, and community health factors such as crime rates. Because elementary school assignment is primarily based on neighborhood, racial and ethnic enclaves in the city are evident from the racial and ethnic compositions of the elementary schools. Fields is the elementary school in the school district with a majority of Latino/a students, at 49% of the student body. Fields is one of 14 elementary schools in the district; it is one of the largest elementary schools, with approximately 600 students each year.

Fields Elementary School

Though Fields Elementary School serves a majority of Latino/a students, it is racially and ethnically diverse and serves a mix of low-income and working-class families (as an indicator of family socioeconomic status, 73.4% of the students at Fields qualify for free and reduced-price lunch). In addition to Latino/a students (49%), the student body is 20% White, 17% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 13% Black. 1% of students are Native American. From observations of Family Night and students' family flags in

the hallways, a number of the students' families are multiracial and multi-ethnic. (The school district did not indicate mixed race as a racial or ethnic identity in its demographic data until the school year after data collection.) The school serves many students who are newcomers to the United States; though there is no exact account of students' immigration status, approximately 40% of the students are English language learners, primarily speaking Spanish as a first language, though the school also serves students whose families have recently arrived from Vietnam, Ukraine, Moldova, and Somalia. The school also experiences approximately 50% student mobility each year.

The Fields staff is, like many elementary schools in the United States, predominantly White and female, as well as middle class. Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 2 classroom teachers of color (both Japanese American women), and 4 out of 12 specialists and school counselors are people of color, also all Asian American/Pacific Islander (3 women, 1 man). There are 4 male classroom teachers; all are White, and 3 are in the upper grades. The staff culture also performs heteronormative gender relations: For example, on Valentine's Day, the male staff members bring breakfast for the female staff (most of the food is prepared by the wives of the male teachers).

The Second-Grade Team

Whereas the larger qualitative study includes data from multiple grade-level teams and classrooms, this analysis focuses on a conversation from only the second-grade team. Fields teachers have structured opportunities to collaborate as grade-level teams on two Friday mornings per month for 90 minutes. Teachers are directed on topic and purpose by the school principal, but the meetings are run by the teachers and have little oversight; instructional coaches are often available by floating from room to room where teams are meeting. Teams also collaborate in ad hoc situations with facilitation of an instructional coach. In these instances, teachers are assigned substitute teachers for 1 to 3 hours to meet with the coach as a team—for example, to analyze assessment data or to examine a new curricular program. Most topics address student assessment data and accomplishing goals assigned by school leaders.

All teachers on the second-grade team, the group at the center of this analysis, are White middle-class women, spanning several generations of career experience. One teacher (Maggie) is a long-term substitute for another teacher (also a White woman) on maternity leave; another teacher (Dani) is just becoming a midcareer teacher with 7 years in teaching and a recent National Board Certification; a third teacher (Lenore) is a veteran

teacher nearing retirement; and the last teacher (Theresa) is a midcareer teacher who has just returned to the classroom after a number of years as a reading specialist. One teacher, Karen, is the school's reading specialist and floats between teams for each week of collaboration.

Important to this analysis and to their espoused identities, the second-grade teachers also have different status as parents. Maggie, the long-term substitute, is married and visibly pregnant with her first child; Dani is single and not a parent; Lenore is married and has two adult male children; and Theresa is married and has two school-age children, one boy and one girl. Karen does not openly discuss her family or partnership status, and she does not leverage them in her participation in the conversation that is analyzed here.

DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Adopting an ethnographic approach to data collection, I immersed myself in Fields Elementary, accumulating approximately 400 hours of observation over 5 months. I conducted frequent and extended observations across different settings to gain a sense of the rhythm and dimensions of teachers' professional work at Fields (e.g., focal classrooms, grade-level team meetings, the teachers' break room, hallways, school assemblies and events, and instructional coaches' offices). I took scripted field notes at all observations and conducted extended formal interviews (audio recorded) with key participants at the beginning and end of the data collection period (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Glesne, 2010). I audio recorded all but one of the grade-level team meetings, as well as some follow-up conversations. These informal follow-up conversations with participating teachers elicited their immediate thoughts about observed incidents in classrooms, in hallways, and in teams. I wrote notes with direct quotations immediately after these conversations (Emerson et al., 2011). After every day of observation and after each interview, I wrote reflective memos to fill in field notes and jot down emerging questions (Emerson et al., 2011).

Specific to this analysis, I attended the grade-level team meetings for three teams in the school and rotated among them. As such, I observed each team approximately once per month, for a total of three to four observations of each team. All meetings included side comments and informal conversations that digressed from the agenda. It is these informal conversations that are of most interest to this analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

From this large data corpus, this article presents a critical discourse analysis of an extended conversation among teachers in the second-grade team. The close examination of illustrative incidents is a strategy for identifying observed discursive and narrative dynamics; it is also illustrative of how to interpret layers of meaning within any given episode of interaction (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Although this analysis focuses on one conversation, the interpretations are situated in the context of the local meanings that emerged from the larger data set. For example, I found over 40 instances in observation field notes and over 25 from interviews that contributed to and supported the meanings I elaborate in the interpretation of one conversation (see the appendix).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) utilizes a close look at the use of language to reveal and understand the power dynamics, sociohistorical contexts, and construction of meaning through interactions, speech, and action (Erickson, 2004; Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005). CDA connects instances of language use and meaning-making to social structure because discourse, as an instantiation of power and knowledge, contributes to ideological projects, even if unintended or unconscious (Fairclough, 2001; Foucault, 1975/1995; Gee, 2005). Attending to these ideological projects provides insight into discursive work and the meanings and implications of participation in an interaction (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005). The discursive work connects collective storytelling—the stories within stories, the traded stories, the jointly told stories—to larger and more enduring meanings (van Dijk, 1993). Thus, critical discourse analysis is not just an analytical strategy, but rather a methodology with a theoretical perspective on the relationship between language, interaction, knowledge, and social contexts. These principles of CDA echo the theoretical ideas that frame this article's goal of explicating interactions, discourse, and participation in teacher communities from a critical whiteness and intersectionality perspective on professional learning.

There is no one way to conduct a critical discourse analysis, but there are numerous strategies for marking and interpreting how social norms, practices, and ideologies constitute and are reshaped at multiple levels of discourse. In this analysis, I adopt Fairclough's (2001) guidance that CDA include "*description* of text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context" (p. 91). Each piece of data presented is examined not

only with description of the structure and content of the stories that are traded in this teacher community, but also with the interpretation and explanation of how the stories contribute to the intersections of race, social class, and gender. In the presentation of findings that follows, *description* and *interpretation* are presented seamlessly with the data. *Explanations* “portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them,” and are included primarily in the discussion following the analysis (Fairclough, 2001, p. 135). In this article, explanation serves to explore the ideological projects and shared knowledge that result from the interpretations of collective storytelling.

A CDA approach to collectively constructed narratives affords explication of how race, gender, and social class norms and values are leveraged in the moment and among multiple people. The analytical strategy recognizes that discourse creates dominant norms and narratives that shift depending on time, participants, and situation or story, yet have potentially lasting effects or unveil latent assumptions and beliefs (Fairclough, 2001; Ochs & Capps, 1997, 2001). Collective processes may highlight shared storylines or suppress potential stories from emerging.

Memos and Transcription

Because this was a qualitative study, data analysis began during data collection with reflective memos, the first step in generating assertions that are testable (Emerson et al., 2011; Erickson, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Transcription of audio recordings was completed for verbal content, with a second round to notate nonverbal participation, such as the length of pauses, sighs, laughter, or people talking over each other. I also noted changes in volume and affect, the stumbling over words, rhythm and emphases in phrases, changes in volume, and the rising and falling of intonation (Gee, 2005; Mazzei, 2004; Ochs, 1979). These communicative elements are notated verbally to preserve ease of reading and understanding (e.g., “pause for 1 second”) and to avoid the interruption of decoding transcription symbols. This uninterrupted “hearing” of the conversation is intended to capture the collective exchange of trading stories.

Coding

I conducted multiple rounds of open coding of the entire data corpus, noting themes and motifs from the data that allowed me to reflect on the meaning of the individual conversation both conceptually and from the participants’ perspectives (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Emerson et al., 2011).

Data that arose from open coding were then sorted within larger conceptual categories of situation or setting (e.g., “coaching meeting” or “2nd-grade team”) and then sorted again by theme and subtheme (e.g., within the category “2nd-grade team,” one theme was “parenting adequacy” and included a subtheme code of “personal experience or example”; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Selecting the Presented Conversation

To select the teacher community conversation after a thorough read of the entire data corpus, I listened to audio recordings multiple times, both with and without the transcripts (Mazzei, 2004). I focused on one conversation that had the richest representation of talk that could illustrate a phenomenon of interest that had emerged from the data: the shared construction of middle-class White teachers’ professional learning through participation in collective storytelling. This phenomenon was common in teachers’ conversations throughout the data corpus, across settings and data sources, thus providing assurance that this was not a singular instance, but rather was relevant to understanding the larger context of Fields teachers’ shared professional identity and repertoire. The appendix provides a log of observation, interview, and member check data that contextualize the conversation and interpretations in the broader discourse of Fields Elementary faculty.

THE RESEARCHER’S ROLE

The final component of CDA and of much critical qualitative research is to identify the position of the researcher as a point of recognizing the ethics, epistemology, and value systems that may impact the research process. As Fairclough (2001) noted, “The only access that the analyst has to [the discourse processes] is in fact through her capacity to herself engage in the discourse processes she is investigating” (p. 138).

I was not a participant in the study, but I interacted with people because I was in their space. In most cases, to be unobtrusive and to focus on observation, I did not join in during structured teacher collaboration or during instruction, but I was an active listener; I nodded, laughed, and made eye contact with speakers. In informal settings, I interacted with study participants, their colleagues, and their students depending on the norms of the situation. At lunch breaks or in the hallways, this meant I sat with teachers and had social conversations with them. Most teachers outside the grade-level teams I observed were polite but did not engage me very deeply; I did not see them very often because my observation schedule was built around the participating grade levels.

I had several self-conscious dilemmas. For example, as with the conversation presented in this article, I did not intervene in conversations that troubled me at the moment they occurred. I was constantly given the “gift of honesty” by study participants, but I found it was a fine line between observing for the sake of collecting important, honest data and intervening in injustice. In these situations, I often felt self-conscious not only because I was the “researcher” in the position of recording other people’s words, but also because I was often the only woman of color in the room when conversations about students and families of color took place. I worried that my silence allowed teachers’ assertions to continue uninterrupted, thereby affecting students or other teachers. Or, I wondered if it was more important to accept the honest conversations, realizing that one intervention by me might shut down a conversation but not transform mindset or practice. In addition, not intervening gave me opportunities to listen for meaning that participants made in the moment. Yet by observing and recording what was spoken, I was implicated by speakers in the middle-class whiteness I sought to challenge.

In the end, I chose to take a stance of attempting to humanize my analyses by including nuances and tensions involved in constructing middle-class White womanhood through storytelling. Middle-class white women teachers are not all the same, and neither are their interactions with others. Their narratives also vary depending on the situation. At the same time, my analysis seeks to deconstruct how intersections of race, class, and gender can influence storytelling interactions that dehumanize students of color living in low-income communities. I also attempt to consider how these dehumanizing stories might be interrupted and recognized as constructions of racial, class, and gender oppression.

AN UNFOLDING NARRATIVE ABOUT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

This critical discourse analysis interrogates conversational moves that create or reassert the second-grade teacher community’s racialized, classed, and gendered narratives related to students and their families at Fields Elementary. These narratives, and the social locations of the middle-class White women teachers who co-craft them, reflect the values and epistemology of the teachers in their social contexts—shared ways of knowing and acting upon the world and of defining the terms of knowledge and practice (Banks, 1998; Collins, 2009; Harding, 1993; Lightfoot, 1978; van Dijk, 1992, 1993). That is, race, social class, and gender are social locations that are both sources and sites of producing meaning.

The conversation analyzed here exemplifies the construction and progression of middle-class White women teachers’ professional knowledge

and identities through trading stories. The exchange begins as a reflection among teachers after a data presentation at a faculty meeting but quickly diverts into trading stories to make sense of an enduring challenge: why, despite working hard and learning up-to-date, research-based instructional practices, student achievement on standardized tests and perceived student motivation remain low. This extended conversation, excerpted in chronological order from transcription of an audio recording, demonstrates the discursive dynamics of storytelling and the tensions involved in restaging collective memories and stories. The conversation and analysis move from one story to another as teachers thread together their narratives about the teacher community, the school, and the students and families at Fields. (Numbers in brackets indicate references to specific line numbers from quoted chunks of the conversation.)

ASSERTING AN EQUITY STANCE

It is another Friday morning at Fields, and the second-grade team is meeting in Dani's classroom. Theresa poses a question about how students who have been at Fields Elementary have performed academically over time, citing a need for a portfolio that will follow students through their years at the school to track their academic progress and to share information about individual students' learning among teachers. She muses aloud (discrediting her own idea) that, with 50% mobility in the student body, many students may not be at Fields from one year to another to maintain such a portfolio. Dani, an unofficial leader of the grade-level team and a National Board Certified Teacher, responds first:

1 ... [W]e go back to that as a school a lot, and that's becoming one of my big pet peeves,
2 because—it can't—that can't be, that can't be an excuse, because that's kind of what it
3 boils down to, is—"Well our kids aren't doing this 'cause there's such high turnover."
4 If—as—a state, as a district, as a country, we're, valuing education, we should all have
5 those same standards, it shouldn't matter where they come from. I know that they come
6 in different, but if, as educators we're all working to the state standards they should
7 come from anywhere and have the same skills. And if they don't, we've gotta get 'em
8 there so when they go to the next school they do have them. Because. That's. There is
9 turnover. But that can't be the reason why we're not making growth

At the opening of her short speech, which she delivers in a serious and careful tone, Dani is asserting an equity stance with language that both challenges Theresa and other Fields educators and recreates the deficit model of otherizing and distancing students of color from school. First, Dani's annoyance at the "excuse" [2] asserts her moral superiority over teachers who she perceives do not take responsibility for the academic achievement of their students. Thus, Dani begins by inserting a perceived divide among Fields faculty, though she softens her statement by including herself in the "we" of the school [1]. However, after two stutters [4], Dani collectively aligns herself ("we") with educators in pan-reference to the state, the school district, and the United States [4]. Dani thereby positions herself as a conscientious insider who values maintaining equitably high expectations for all students [5, 7–8].

In a twist, however, Dani challenges the collective of educators to meet professional responsibilities for equity while deepening a disjuncture from diverse students they serve. Her use of the pronoun "they" in reference to students asserts that students are distant subjects [5], emphasized with the use of "different," asserting that the middle-class White women teachers represent the norm (of achievement, of language, of social class, and of culture and ethnicity) [6]. Dani's conception that "they come in different" suggests that, consequently, once working with conscientious teachers, students are made not-different, based on their starting point [5–6]. Thus, Dani's superior stance on teacher responsibility rests on, or is toned down by, the concession and assertion of students' otherness. (Her speech also is not responding to, or in keeping with the tone of, Theresa's attempt at problem-solving.)

Next, Dani begins telling a story that puts her in another authority position, presenting a positive portrayal of her expertise, though the story takes place during her student teaching period (cf. van Dijk, 1992, 1993):

10 *When I student taught, it was a migrant school, we had like 90% turnover during the*
 11 *year, but we were all meeting standard. And they were in and out of school all the*
 12 *time, so it can be done, and so I think—that kinda—I don't know, I'm n—I feel like I'm*
 13 *being like (chuckles) grumpy about it, but like, I think we always, that, for years, we've*
 14 *fallen back on, "Oh, we have an ESL population," "Oh, we have high turnover, we have;*
 15 *our kids come from poverty and they don't have vocabulary." Those are all—situations*
 16 *that we have, but I think that we have to figure out what are we going to do to get*
 17 *beyond that*

In this turn to the authority of personal experience that serves as a counterexample to “excuses” put forward by other teachers, Dani abandons the “we” of Fields teachers and switches to “I” [10] as her unique experience in the teacher community aligns her with a new “we” of teachers at the academically successful school where she was a student teacher [10-11]. Her equity argument remains focused on mobility, though the label of “migrant” [10] additionally signals the racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic status of the school’s students. The use of the pronoun “they” to refer to students in “*they were in and out of school all the time*” [11–12] suggests that the students are not included in the teacher-owned “we” of “*we were all meeting standard*” [11]. Thus, Dani excludes students from their own successful achievement, putting ownership of success among teachers, even temporary student teachers. This claiming of credit is a disservice to the students’ success, but also is a telling marker of whose interests are of primary concern in the story—the teachers’.

Returning to the Fields context, Dani struggles to find her place back with Fields teachers upon leaving her counterexample [12]: She hesitates, refers to herself in the singular “I,” laughs at herself [13], minimizing some of her speech by calling herself “grumpy” [13] and hesitating before moving herself back to the Fields faculty, realigning with them and their challenges as she notes, “*I think we always . . . we’ve fallen back on. . .*” [13–14]. Yet Dani continues to critique Fields faculty’s excuses of students’ cultural and linguistic minoritization and lower socioeconomic status [14–15]. On the other hand, Dani’s pause before acknowledging “*situations*” [15] signals that she is conscious of and trying to avoid explicit racialized and classed language and that her equity stance still rests on a deficit perspective along with other Fields teachers.

Dani’s equity stances are examples of a partial definition of equity—valuing equity in test scores as an achievement of schools and teachers, while neglecting equity outcomes such as the humanization of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994; D. M. Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013). By establishing distance from students of color, even in stories of success like Dani’s, deracialized language protects speakers (particularly White individuals) who are asserting negative portrayals of people of color and other minoritized groups (Bell, 2003; van Dijk, 1992, 1993; Vaught, 2012; Yoon, 2012). In this way, deracialized language perpetuates the separateness and superiority of whiteness, such as White teachers’ taking credit for migrant students’ successful achievement but not for low achievement (cf. Pollock, 2004). With this stance, equity is an outcome that White teachers can value *to some extent* while stating racist suggestions and exclusions (Kailin, 1999).

PARENTING AND PARENTAL PRIORITIES

Despite Dani's earlier insistence that teachers at Fields should not make excuses for students' poor academic achievement, she leads a turn in the conversation that changes her strategy of asserting teachers' responsibility and efficacy to achieve equity with students:

- 18 *I really truly think that it boils down to—I mean we're doing great things, we're*
 19 *working our tails off, we've we're doing really wonderful things, especially, when you*
 20 *go and look at, some of the stuff that's happening at other schools. Fields really is—out*
 21 *there doing what they need to be doing—instructionally wise, I mean there's definitely*
 22 *places where we can grow—but—I think a lot of it also boils down to—the importance*
 23 *of education at home. And, when, it's more important to sit down and play video*
 24 *games until three o'clock in the morning when you're a first-grader, or a second-*
 25 *grader, that is not putting the priority on education, and it, we as educators can beat*
 26 *ourselves up, and backwards, and, everything, but there's a point where parents need*
 27 *to step up and take that responsibility as well because there's, only so much we can do.*

Here Dani's deficit beliefs about students and families seem unchallenged by her equity stance because of the professional difficulties of ensuring student success without “*the importance of education at home*” [22–23]. This seeming contradiction reverses her earlier claims about teachers' taking responsibility, saying about herself and other teachers that “*there's, only so much we can do*” [27]. Reversals are common in racist discourses that deny racism (van Dijk, 1992, 1993). In addition to attributing low student academic achievement to parents' “*not putting the priority on education*” [25], Dani offers an appraisal that Fields teachers meet their professional responsibilities and acknowledges teachers' efforts and focus on instruction [18–21]. Dani addresses a global need among the teachers to be released from guilt (“*we as educators can beat ourselves up, and backwards. . .*”), suggesting with “*we as educators*” not only that she has felt this guilt but that the whole group of women has felt this guilt [25–26].

Dani provides one abstracted parenting behavior—allowing young students from first and second grade to stay up late playing video games [23–24]—that becomes representative of parents' low valuing of education. Dani emphasizes the young age of the children and the extreme hours of playing video games [24], adding weight to the imagery of parental

irresponsibility. Dani's use of a sentence structure that does not include a specific person as subject ("*when it's more important*") generalizes the statement to more than one family [23]. Finally, the use of the video games example is gendered because playing video games is an activity that is marketed to boys and men (e.g., fathers) more than to girls and women. Dani thus positions video games as an anomaly that goes against the group's presumed ideas about good mothering, though video games are popular with children across demographic categories of today's youth, regardless of whether parents, male or female, are vigilant about bedtime.

In this segment, Dani is utilizing popular narratives about the parenting priorities of families of color and families living in poverty (Osei-Kofi, 2005). The responsibility of parents, from the institutional perspective of the school, is an individualistic model that functions to determine merit and morality in decontextualized ways (Applebaum, 2005). Using negative stereotypes of parents of color, many of whom are immigrants with low socioeconomic and social status, this narrative of parental responsibility does not consider structural constraints and the teachers' or institution's implications.

Dani's assertion that teachers have fulfilled their responsibilities plays into the idea of women's not being able to do everything to satisfy everyone's needs and to do their jobs perfectly. Dani denounces these expectations for women without an examination of social and institutional constraints of gender and teaching. In popular narratives and in experience, these expectations spark women's guilt, particularly activated in working mothers and teacher mothers (Lightfoot, 1978). Specifically, White women's guilt over their stated helplessness is also a phenomenon remarked upon in popular films since the first wave of White women's feminist movement (Dyer, 1997; Rich, 1979). In this way, Dani uses a White women's assertion of professional unity in ways that assert negative and inferior attitudes toward students' families.

A DISMISSED REINTERPRETATION

The reasoning that parents are not holding up their end of responsibility for student learning is not entirely shared, however. While Dani attributes student academic challenges to the negligence of parents' allowing young children to stay up to extremely late hours, Theresa responds with nuanced agreement to Dani's point about parenting with an alternate interpretation of parents' actions:

28 *When I went to a parent thing for [my son], that was one thing the principal said,*
 29 *'cause it was the homework strategy class, and, that they were giving the parents, and*
 30 *... he said, "You know, you know, do you make sure that when your child goes up to*
 31 *start doing homework that their, iPods, their cell phones, the TV, everything is turned*
 32 *off and taken away from 'em." And some of the parents, didn't, really, they raised their*
 33 *hands and said you know, "I've never really thought about that, I've never checked to*
 34 *make sure everything was off for them," and you're right because, you know, it's really*
 35 *hard to learn when you've got so much media coming at you.*

In this story, Theresa positions herself as a parent rather than as a teacher who is frustrated with parents: Theresa affirms the point that responsibility belongs with parents for monitoring their children's homework completion and video game time but frames the issue as one of parent education rather than an issue of the family's respect for education ("*some of the parents, didn't, really, they raised their hands. . .*") [32–33]. In framing the issue as one of ignorance rather than negligence, Theresa maintains superiority in knowledge over other parents but not superiority in morals or values. Theresa also focuses on what optimizes learning for any person by starting with "*you know,*" using a generalized "*you*" to open up the experience and align with the students' perspective: "*you know, it's really hard to learn when you've got so much media coming at you*" [34–35]. These are humanizing moves, asserting shared humanity in learning needs.

At the same time, these intended positive interpretations are signs of White teachers' privilege. Hyland (2005) examined the metaphors that White women teachers use to describe their roles as teachers of students of color; teachers describe these roles as the *helper*, the *assimilated White person*, the *intercultural communicator*, and the *radical*. Hyland asserted complexity between intention and meaning: Though the metaphors reveal good intentions on the part of the White women teachers to support equitable outcomes for students of color, Hyland explained that the metaphors also are imbued with racism involving the helplessness of people of color, the inferiority of non-White or non-middle-class experiences, and the perception of teaching students of color as an experience of frustration and social distance from students and families. These studies examine the construction of White teachers as subjects not only of racial privilege but also as subjects entangled in relationships across social boundaries and ideologies, including social class, gender, and Americanness. Theresa's formulation echoes the whiteness in these good intentions.

In this moment, Dani dismisses this reframing of her point with the phrase, “*Well and it’s even just beyond that. . .*” [36] and tells another story:

- 36 *Well and it’s even just beyond that like my first year teaching I’ll never forget my first*
37 *conference (laughs, looks at Lenore)—you remember, so the dad sits there, and he’s*
38 *like “I can’t get him to do his homework, he just wants to play video games.” “Well,*
39 *tell him he can’t play vi—” I’m 22 (she laughs, Lenore and Theresa begin laughing), I’m*
40 *telling this man, I’m like, “Tell him not to play the video games till his homework’s*
41 *done?” “I could do that?” Like, “Yeah, you could.” And he goes, “But he goes to his*
42 *friend’s house to play video games,” and I go, “Tell him he cannot leave, your house,*
43 *until his homework is done and he’s showed it to you.” “What a good idea.”*

Dani minimizes Theresa’s turn in the conversation with “*it’s even just beyond that,*” a construction that softens her rejection (“*just*”) while asserting a different caliber of situation (“*beyond that*”) in her claim about the incompetence of some parents [36]. She physically turns to Lenore, aligning Lenore with her perspective by adding “*you remember*” [37], and asserts the power of “*I’ll never forget my first conference*” [36–37]. The weight not only of personal experience and shared recollection but of a landmark professional experience (a teacher’s first parent conference at a new school) adds authority and intended humor to the story (van Dijk, 1993). Dani tells a story with a tone of cynical laughter and disbelief to support the validity of her perceptions of parents’ lack of discipline and authority over their children, particularly boys. Dani leaves her statement at the time incomplete, thereby assuming understanding from her audience [39]. She also emphasizes the absurdity of her having to give advice by noting her age at the time (“*I’m 22*”) and with her laughter [39]. Lenore and Theresa provide understanding and the response she seeks, joining in her laughter. Dani embellishes with “*Tell him not to. . .*,” ending her representation of her advice with a rise in intonation, not to ask a question but to suggest that the statement should have been obvious [40–41]. Her voicing of the clueless father is in a tone that suggests the dawning of being empowered as a result of her intervention—a person who previously asked, “*I could do that?*” [41] changes his stance to “*What a good idea*” [43].

Embedded in Dani’s beliefs about proper parenting is an authoritative relationship between parent and child and, too, between teacher and parent. Dani uses this story to turn away from Theresa’s alignment and empathy with parents who do not know any better, toward a tone that

communicates that parents who are ignorant to the point of absurdity and whom teachers have to train with explicit direction (“*Tell him he cannot leave. . .*”) [42]. These conceptions of being a middle-class White woman teacher of students of color have remained relevant in the minds of teachers, such as those who teach high rates of immigrant students (Hyland, 2005; Lightfoot, 1978). For example, Thompson (1997) examined the ways in which White women teachers establish and enact “surrogate family values” that are middle class and White (and heteronormative) in their classrooms, though these values may or may not reflect the students’ actual family values. Teachers, therefore, both claim and are held up as “surrogate mothers” (who function *in loco parentis*) in school, even if they are not parents themselves.

Other teachers respond positively to Dani’s explanation about poor parenting and begin to add their own stories to the conversation. Two stories later, Lenore retells a story about parent negligence in not disciplining their children, but rather playing with them:

- 44 LENORE: *Do you remember the girl we had a few years ago? Lindsay? Was that*
 45 *her name?*
- 46 KAREN: *Oh yeah, little Lindsay.*
- 47 LENORE: *They um, they played poker with her all night.*
- 48 THERESA: *Oh I remember you telling me about that.*
- 49 LENORE: *Because they did a home visit, and there were all these poker chips on*
 50 *the table.*
- 51 DANI: *Mm-hmm.*
- 52 (Group is quiet for one beat.)
- 53 LENORE: *12, 1, 2, poker. Second grader.*
- 54 DANI (Quietly): *I think that’s a giant, giant, chunk. Your brain can’t learn when it’s*
 55 *hungry and tired.*

Lenore’s story contributes to the repetition of organizational narratives to solidify shared memories and understanding; the teachers who comprise “*they did a home visit*” must have reported this to other teachers with disapproval, and other teachers have heard the story before [48–49]. Lenore has taken on this story as her own experience, one she can retell.

As indicated by the group’s pause of silence [52] and Dani’s quiet

volume, subdued from previous comments [54], the conversation has changed in tone and is now serious. In addition to the issue of parental authority over bedtime for young children [53], the teachers discuss the appropriateness of parental roles as playmates [47]. Dani co-narrates the significance of Lenore's story by connecting parenting skills to social class, bringing in a heretofore unmentioned and irrelevant aspect of the students' upbringing: "*Your brain can't learn when it's hungry and tired*" [54–55]. This claim connects the parenting choices observed thus far in the stories to being poor and facing food insecurity. It also attaches the teachers' authority and grave perspective to scientific evidence for all learners globally, with reference to "*your brain*" [54]. Dani returns the conversation to its original claim—that poor parenting is largely to blame for the teachers' frustrations with low student achievement among students living in poverty. This conversation has become, through trading stories, a complaint about the challenges that make teaching at Fields difficult, though it begins as an argument for teachers' accountability (van Dijk, 1992, 1993).

MORALITY, CRIMINALITY, AND LOSS OF INNOCENCE IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES OF COLOR

Though the conversation is waning, the escalation of stories culminates in a final story with co-construction and co-narration of meaning. Thus far, the stories about parenting have been situated in the context of gender (mostly discussing the low-level parenting sense of fathers and the effects on their sons), racial and ethnic "difference," and poverty. Lenore's story about family members' playing poker with a second grader (a child 7 or 8 years old) introduces potential allusions to morality in relation to gambling with poker chips, as well as a late bedtime—though late bedtimes and family game nights could potentially happen in families of any demographic. Theresa, Karen, and Lenore are agreeing with Dani's last statement about learning when "*hungry and tired*" when Dani turns the next story explicitly to morality and values of appropriateness:

- 56 DANI: *Tommy's conference it's the same thing, his dad, I sit there I go, "He's not*
57 *writing, I can't get him to write, and all he does is draw pictures of people*
58 *killing each other. And, writes about Halo." And, his mom like smacked his*
59 *dad and was like, "Told ya that was bad for him," I'm like, huh (eyes wide),*
60 *he sits and plays Halo, all night, with his dad. That is so inappropriate.*
61 (Teachers talking over each other, discussing what Halo is.)

- 62 DANI: ... Ohhh, [and] David, he would be in third grade this year, his favorite game
 63 was, um *Grand Theft Auto*, (LENORE: Oh, yeah, right) (THERESA: My son is
 64 not allowed to play that) (LENORE: Exactly) and he wanted to grow up to be
 65 in a gang so he could shoot people (KAREN: Oh my God!) and spray paint
 66 buildings like he does in his video game.
- 67 KAREN: Who was that?
- 68 DANI: He was in first grade, David.
- 69 THERESA: And they rape women on there too. On that game? They rape women.
- 70 DANI: And he would play it for hours.
- 71 (The teachers murmur shocked words.)

It is the turn to two specific video games, *Halo* and *Grand Theft Auto*, that leads to Dani's capstone stories about Tommy and David. These stories explicitly identify the moral flaws in the parenting that Fields students receive. Dani uses a tone not of amusement, but of matter-of-factness that induces shock. The story of Dani's meeting with Tommy's parents includes an implicit suggestion that it is fathers who do not understand propriety, while mothers do instinctively, even if without certainty [58–59]. Although the conversation with Tommy's parents begins as a conversation that shares a teacher's vulnerability with parents ("*He's not writing, I can't get him to write*"), which is a conversation that could engage parents in student learning [56–58]; this professional vulnerability is turned into another example of her superiority in defining appropriateness despite not being a parent herself [59]. In these stories about Tommy and David (and the boys' parents), Dani and the other teachers explicitly define boundaries of appropriateness [60], with references to their own parenting guidelines ("*my son. . .*" and "*Exactly*") [63–64]. The game *Grand Theft Auto* is given as an example of one that is inappropriate for any age. Theresa comments, and Lenore agrees, that her child is not allowed to play this game and that one reason is the game's glorified violence against women (Theresa repeats this description of the game twice) [69]. With their contributions regarding the significance of the details of the video game, the teachers are co-creating this story about David. The storyline for David is a saturation of glorified violence, with a secondary story of comparison to the teachers' morally superior parenting.

Dani continues with the story about David to describe the effect that poor parenting can have on a child: a loss of innocence. She recounts:

- 72 DANI: *And I was so—so—blunt with [David]? Because he, I mean—he is so grown*
73 *up for a six-year-old? Like, “You will go to jail. Do you wanna sit in the jail?*
74 *Lookit, it’s gonna be this big,” and we drew this box on the floor, “You will sit*
75 *there, you will have a bed, and you will never see your mommy, you’ll be*
76 *behind bars your whole life, is that what you wanna do? Do you want to sit*
77 *in a little square and never see your mommy again.” And he looks at me, he*
78 *goes, “Ugh. There’s visitation rights.” (Laughs)*
- 79 KAREN: *(Laughing) Oh, I remember that. I remember that.*
- 80 DANI: *It just—*
- 81 MAGGIE: *Does he have a relative in jail or something?*
- 82 DANI: *His entire family is in gangs and in jail.*
- 83 LENORE: *Last year I had three kids with a parent in jail.*
- 84 DANI: *I cannot believe this little six-year-old is just sooo—not innocent.*

Dani’s voice rises at the end of each sentence as she describes her conversation with David [72–78]. The rising voice is not to literally ask a question but to convey her disbelief and to request understanding from her audience [72]. Dani’s laugh at the end of her story [78] suggests disbelief at absurdity. Karen affirms the veracity of Dani’s story, and her allegiance with Dani’s experience, by also laughing and saying, “*Oh, I remember that!*” [79].

Dani’s story emerges from the group as another example of incompetent and uneducated parenting: recall that, in previous stories, Dani has connected parents’ lack of awareness about appropriateness of video games to students’ academic work and behavior [56–60]. Parents who play particularly violent video games with their children (or permit their children to do so unchaperoned) limit their children’s academic growth and lead children to glorified violence [62–66]. The broad strokes with which Dani describes David’s family (“*His entire family is in gangs or in jail!*”) reduce their identities and lives to criminality [82], a common trope for families of color and families living in poverty (Goff et al., 2014; Osei-Kofi, 2005; van Dijk, 1993). Lenore’s contribution (“*last year I had three kids with a parent in jail!*”) broadens the claim and adds to the evidence base that families of students at Fields are morally suspect and that criminality is a common challenge in Fields students’ lives [83]. As a result of multiple

creates distance, an implicit generalized grouping of parents in opposition to a generalized group of teachers. By implication, the teachers in this conversation take the superior position across the divide. In contrast to Fields parents, the teachers do care about educating and socializing children, and they follow the proper boundaries of morality and exposure to knowledge of violence and criminality. The narrative and trading of stories ends shortly after Lenore's definitive explanation of Fields Elementary's academic challenges as residing in negligent parenting and parents.

DISCUSSION OF IDEOLOGICAL PROJECTS ACHIEVED BY MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE WOMANHOOD AND TRADING STORIES

In the preceding conversation, a teacher community develops a collective narrative by sharing stories back and forth, or "trading stories," about students and their families. The narrative progression is central to this development; the process of turn-taking, use of pronouns, and patterns of participation (including adding to or embellishing another teacher's story, and staying silent) contributes to meaning, information, and potential resources for the group's learning and identity (Duncan, 2004; Engeström, 1987; Horn, 2007; Mawhinney, 2008a; Mazzei, 2008; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Scott, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The conversation begins with sharing concerns related to students' histories of academic achievement, and many of the stories reflect concern for students' physical, academic, and social-emotional well-being. However, stories also align with deficit-based stereotypes about the lives and child-rearing of people living in poverty and people of color. The discourse about parenting includes allusions to criminal behavior, students' physical and psychological care, and parents' valuing of education, particularly in the case of fathers who behave like children themselves (e.g., not having authority over their children, playing video games). These assumptions are affirmed by silence, by follow-up questions for more information, and by offering additional stories that elaborate on an accepted idea.

This explanation highlights the salience of the theoretical framework of collective storytelling from a critical intersectionality perspective on middle-class White womanhood in teacher communities. These stories provide knowledge resources for middle-class, White women teachers to make generalized conclusions about what it means to teach at Fields and what it means to struggle for academic success with students. White, middle-class, and gendered notions are interlaced throughout the teachers' discussion, such as knowledge based on personal experience with parenting. The knowledge resources are grounded in an ideological context of middle-class White womanhood.

Ideology can be defined as a narrative that frames how we understand and “make sense” of our material and social existence (Hall, 1990, as cited in Lewis, 2001). Ideologies are “collective property” that work most effectively when they appear “natural” and speakers are least aware of them (Lewis, 2001, p. 800). Because these ideologies are culturally sanctioned and can be taken for granted, they impede critical interrogation. When these ideologies are supported by a “moral common sense,” they become even more difficult to critique (Applebaum, 2005, p. 287). Four ideological projects of “common sense” surfaced by this example of trading stories are: (1) establishing social and moral distance; (2) constructing colormuteness as a cover for morality; (3) decontextualizing institutional constraints on teaching at Fields Elementary; and (4) defining boundaries of middle-class White womanhood as professional learning.

ESTABLISHING SOCIAL AND MORAL DISTANCE

Perhaps the prominent ideological project of the conversation is maintaining the teachers’ desired and perceived social distance from parents of their students. This social distance is well documented in literature on whiteness and middle-class sensibilities, including those among women teachers in diverse, primarily low-income schools (Addams, 1902; Bryk & Schneider, 1996; Frankenberg, 1993; Hyland, 2005; Hytten & Warren, 2003; Lightfoot, 1978; Lipsitz, 2011; Reay, 2008). In these stories, middle-class White people are the silent foil to “Other” people who are explicitly examined in the story. Relationships that could close or bridge social distance are difficult to build without commonly recognized signs of competence, commitment, or care (Bryk & Schneider, 1996). These relationships and shared commitments observed among the team here are characteristically and substantively opposed to closing social distance.

While parents’ structuring of their home environments for children’s academic success and moral protection is the topic among the teachers, the tone of disbelief belies that the teachers feel the parents who are characters in the stories are foreign, literally incredible. The group’s uptake of Dani’s dismissal of Theresa’s counterexample about attending a parent information night for her son, for example, shows not only Dani’s status among her peers but also the group’s agreement and affirmation of Dani’s line of conversation. The traded stories maintain social distance rather than take perspectives that ally the teachers with the students’ parents.

Further, as a group, the teachers use their authority as teachers, as middle-class White women, and as mothers to define (in)appropriate knowledge and behaviors, and do not explore or question the stories or reported attitudes in them. Alternative or in-depth interpretations of

perceived parenting behaviors potentially could be provided by collective storytelling norms that include contesting each other's accounts with additional questions or information, or reframing students' families in an assets-based way. Examples of these assets-based or alternative accounts of families of color exist and are growing in number; there is a strong body of literature on parenting roles, strategies, and dynamics in families of color in urban communities, as reviewed by Burton and Jarrett (2000). Instead, the dynamics of middle-class White womanhood are such that the teachers collectively describe the parenting and the students' school behaviors as pathological and global. Specifically, as women with knowledge about motherhood, the teachers establish their superior understanding of how to monitor children's activities in comparison to unaware fathers. Given the knowledge asserted even by those teachers who are not mothers, the teachers' middle-class White womanhood claims a normative and universal moral as justification for social distance (see also Applebaum, 2005, 2010; S. J. Lee, 2005). Social distance allows teachers to make claims stripped of the complexity and emotional investment that comes with humanization. It allows abstraction and reduction to stereotypes without dignity for characters in the stories. Social distance based on difference is not horizontal, or value neutral. Social distance is also hierarchical.

CONSTRUCTING COLORMUTENESS AS A COVER FOR MORALITY

The second ideological project of the preceding conversation is related to the perception of teachers' moral standing. Extending beyond the first ideological project of maintaining social distance that is based on the moral correctness of middle-class White womanhood, the second project also asserts that middle-class White womanhood is morally virtuous, but for making moral judgments without explicit mention of the race of who is discussed. That is, because overt racism and race talk are now socially and politically unacceptable, teachers have conversations about people of color without mentioning race, rendering them colormute (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Pollock, 2004; van Dijk, 1992).

The ideological project that colormuteness and social distance are moral, "nonracist" stances is flawed, however (Applebaum, 2005, 2010). First, it permits teachers to say or do unjust things without the appearance of seeming racist, and with a positive self-presentation to save face (Applebaum, 2010; van Dijk, 1992). Second, colormuteness, according to Pollock, is composed of contradictions. Even without race language, colormuteness upholds the assumption that race neutrality is the ideal and that whiteness is the ideological and moral norm (S. J. Lee, 2005). Race is also openly discussed in certain situations and only in reference to

students. The bodies and social locations of the middle-class White women teachers who are telling stories “speak” to the contrast between storyteller and characters in the stories.

Colormuteness and colorblindness also deny and silence exploration of the systemic and persistent nature of racism and role of race in schooling (Applebaum, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Pollock, 2004). While the second-grade teachers are silent about race, they maintain the overlapping relationships between race and social class, language, geographic location, and gender by calling on racialized stereotypes of morality and criminality, used in deracialized terms. The absence of race labels is a strategy to avoid appearances of overt racism that reifies whiteness and fronts an equity-oriented struggle. In reality, colormuteness changes the nature of moral urgency and precludes the potential of maintaining an equity-focused conversation about how to collectively and systemically achieve instructional successes for students marginalized by institutional and instructional practices.

An alternative interpretation could be that race silence, or colormuteness, exists because the teachers at Fields see social class as more salient to Fields than race or ethnicity, given the racial and ethnic diversity of the student body. Low socioeconomic status could seem the common thread and therefore the stronger “explanatory” variable in their students’ lives. This may be the case in some situations; having a critical intersectional perspective affords that multiple social locations are significant in a given context. However, also from an intersectionality perspective, focusing on students’ social class alone, or on students’ linguistic diversity alone, does not account for the significance of the teachers’ stories or of teachers’ racial positions. Racism emerges even in racially diverse settings through the ideological and normative power of middle-class whiteness and middle-class White teachers. Social distance and moral superiority, cushioned by the avoidance of explicit race labels, give teachers psychological and emotional space to tell one-sided stories that belittle the people in them. This belittling is a narrative violence that dehumanizes students and families and reifies middle-class White supremacy with a gendered highlight on motherhood.

DECONTEXTUALIZING INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS ON TEACHING AT FIELDS ELEMENTARY

Rather than discussing the challenges in compassionate ways that show concern for the students and their welfare, teachers trade belittling and dehumanizing stories that draw great social distance between and moral superiority over students and parents. In this way, these teachers resolve

their original concern of achieving greater success with student learning. Herein lies the source of the conversation: The teachers are discussing issues they encounter that make it more difficult for them to teach, settling on explanations—essentially complaints and gossip—that place responsibility on students and parents in decontextualized, ahistorical, apolitical, and simplistic ways (for more on complaints, see van Dijk, 1992).

This analysis does not suggest that the teachers are morally bankrupt or that they do not voice potentially valid concerns. The video games discussed are violent and include violence against women, and young children need enough sleep for their health and physical development. There are studies that show the effects of stress, particularly from poverty, on the human body, and that these stressors affect people of color in the United States at far higher rates than White people (as cited in Lipsitz, 2011, and in C. M. Steele, 2010). Living in poverty presents stress to which young children may not know how to respond appropriately or safely, leading to disruptive behaviors. And, to be sure, some students engage in oppositional behaviors that can make it difficult for teachers to teach a whole classroom of students. However, it is notable that the teachers curtail discussions of institutional and policy constraints that they begin to mention, such as class sizes or lack of student portfolio databases.

Teachers need places to release tensions—an important dimension of the conversation is the frustration of teachers who are asked to be accountable for student achievement without some of the required support or resources that equip them to meet these demands (Mawhinney, 2008a, 2008b). In certain spheres of politics and public media, teachers are vilified as lazy, with their actual working hours beyond their contracts going unrecognized and unpaid (Bartlett, 2004). Similarly, teachers at Fields are frustrated or overwhelmed within institutions, norms, and organizational structures that are mismatched with transforming expectations (Bartlett, 2004; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Mawhinney, 2008a, 2008b). Observations at Fields echo much of the literature about the constraints and pressures of teaching in highly diverse, high-poverty schools in the context of reform, accountability, and, now, budget crises (Anyon, 1997; Biddle & Berliner, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; J. Lee & Wong, 2004; Little, 1993; Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997; Rinke & Valli, 2010). Other institutional constraints, such as leadership turnover at Fields, have led to unstable conditions that affect the organizational health required to respond to students and families with the respect and care that may work hand-in-hand with increasing student achievement. And, to complicate matters, the social-historical function of teaching as a role of socialization and childrearing may compete with the demands for children's rigorous academic achievement.

These institutional and political challenges of teaching echo Lipsitz's (2011) statement that whiteness is "not so much a color as a condition" (p. 37). Whiteness is less about White people than it is about ideologies and policies that advantage whiteness. Thus, teachers at Fields are working against constraints of institutional policies that disadvantage their students and position teachers as "helping" them; at the same time, they identify with the institutional goals and policies that normativize middle-class whiteness and permit teacher "helplessness" in light of students' home lives. Middle-class White womanhood in teaching and in trading stories can create unintelligible tensions.

DEFINING BOUNDARIES OF WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS WOMANHOOD AS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Tensions of middle-class White womanhood are constructed in social context and social interactions. This stance extends theories of professional learning to reconsider social contexts in the co-construction of professional knowledge, repertoire, and enterprise (Wenger, 1998). The processes and structures in which the construction of middle-class White womanhood take place are central to teacher learning and professionalization. These dynamics of problem-solving, identity work, and status positioning are processes of learning in communities.

In the second-grade teacher community at Fields, the trading of stories plays several functions: It serves as a status symbol (who has the best or most extreme stories); it solidifies the teachers' views of parents as shared and valid; it avoids addressing perceived ineffectiveness while explaining the group's shared struggle at meeting standards and expectations; and it locates the cause of teachers' limitations outside their control while keeping up appearances of equity orientation. By co-narrating their stories, teachers establish themselves as a group, constructing the boundaries of their perspective in opposition to students and families, and also reifying unequal status within ranks in terms of who can define that group position. As a result, group dynamics may shut down equity commitments, such that teachers *as a group* permit the painting of students and families in broad, demeaning strokes. Trading stories is a participation structure for collective dynamics of middle-class White womanhood in the teacher community.

The exchanging of stories can serve as a powerful tool for learning in a community (Benjamin, 1968; Horn, 2010; Mawhinney, 2008a, 2008b; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Paley, 1997). However, the kinds of learning observed at Fields were what Engeström (2007) would call "stabilization knowledge," or sharing information that secures boundaries around how work and identity are envisioned. In moral and ideological terms,

Everyday narratives of personal experience elaborately encode and perpetuate moral worldviews. Personal narratives generally concern life incidents in which a protagonist has violated social expectations. Recounting the violation and taking a moral stance towards it provide a discursive forum for human beings to clarify, reinforce, or revise what they believe and value. (Ochs & Capps, 2001, pp. 45–46)

Middle-class whiteness and womanhood, particularly the element of parenting, has played a role in creating and narrating shared understanding of what it means to be a teacher at Fields Elementary. The intersecting professional and personal identities and broader ideologies of middle-class White women teachers make parenting and social distance targets for stabilization knowledge in the teacher community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REFRAMING NARRATIVES: TEACHER UNLEARNING AND OTHER LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers, particularly elementary-level teachers who are with their students for a full day, know intimate details about their students' lives. As Lightfoot (1978) described, this knowledge informs teachers' beliefs about students and families. They make sense of their knowledge with others in the form of trading stories during professional collaboration time. Though trading stories is an informal part of professional collaboration, it—perhaps more than the logistical planning of curriculum or scanning of assessment results—comprises substantive moments for teacher learning and professionalization because the stories define the conditions and meaning of teachers' experiences in racialized, classed, and gendered terms.

There are multiple implications that can be derived from this analysis of just one conversation. First, it is well understood that teachers' beliefs about race, class, and gender affect their instruction and that students can perceive their teachers' expectations for them (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rist, 1970/2000; Vaught, 2012). Thus, the ways in which teachers discuss students' lives—and share the opinions they have about these lives—are vitally important to their teaching and to students' experiences in school. But the lens of teacher beliefs can make beliefs seem static, rather than situated, shifting, and dynamic with tensions (Britzman, 2003; Philip, 2011; Windschitl, 2002). Interpreting trading stories as learning in professional communities through a lens of intersectionality of race, class, and gender expands, rather than reduces, the complexity of multiple social locations, of agency and structure, of language and meaning

in hand with experience, and of the interplay of collective and individual discourse. Thus, professional learning in teacher communities must address teachers' identities, beliefs, and informal discursive repertoires as conflicted and dynamic areas of concern.

Second, an application of this analysis and framework applies to the role of storytelling, specifically trading stories and collective narratives. This analysis shows how stories that seem like a simple opportunity to vent or solve problems can instead construct knowledge and repertoires that dehumanize students and families (cf. Bell, 2003). The focus on the collective process is essential: The narratives and participation in group conversations are constitutive elements of teacher learning as well as the reproduction of middle-class White womanhood. However, the path of the preceding conversation is not the only trajectory the stories could have followed. Stories also can be a powerful tool for an *unlearning* process that can begin as one of reframing narratives. For example, counterstories—that is, stories told from the perspectives of the marginalized—are one pillar of critical race theory that can engage the unlearning and reframing process. Scott (1991) also provided insights into the very idea of recounting experience as an opportunity to examine the constructs and institutions that make up that experience. School leaders might begin to address this unlearning process for themselves and for their teachers by supporting professional learning that engages self-awareness about their social positions (e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, family structure, language). Another opportunity could include listening to counterstories and practicing reframing stories and experiences in groups. Reframing likely benefits from having a more diverse workforce, with teachers who see aspects of themselves in their students and the school community, though even this may not change schoolwide discursive practices. A third possibility could be to ask teachers to identify institutional constraints, needs, and resources in their professional collaboration, in order that leaders may support teachers in differentiated ways.

In addition to greater diversity in the teacher workforce, one source for informing teachers' access to marginalized perspectives includes home visits; these visits seek to reframe how educators perceive students' families in terms of their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The design of the funds of knowledge model is an intensive and long-term professional learning process facilitated by experts on bridging difference, questioning cultural and ideological assumptions, and building relationships between teachers and families. However, I offer one note of caution: Home visits can be transformative or constraining, as evidenced by Lenore's retelling of a home visit to a Fields family. Home visits can be used to harm or to humanize. School leaders who decide to utilize home

visits for teachers' collaborative learning must keep in mind that home visits require intensive preparation and debriefing to become a true funds of knowledge approach.

A third implication of this analysis relates to how school leaders facilitate teacher communities to develop and draw on the kinds of organizational narratives that build and edify a school culture focused on equitable opportunities for students. It is noted earlier that the teachers at Fields do not address institutional constraints or make much headway on solutions in their professional communities or in their stories. For numerous reasons, it is apparent that teachers' struggles contribute to processes of blaming that are unproductive and harmful. The traded stories contribute to a professional culture and a set of shared narratives and assumptions that dehumanize students and their families. Facilitation could support discursive repertoires and processes of reframing to make sense of successes and failures and to constructively address challenges related to bridging extreme social distance from students.

These implications come with the caveat that interrupting the collective storytelling that reflects institutional and social norms of middle-class whiteness is likely a multifaceted, long-term, and challenging endeavor. However, the power of stories and storytelling is high-stakes in terms that are not captured by current equity analyses of achievement, as significant as those are. In the stories traded in this analysis, middle-class White women teachers engage social discourses about low-income people of color at the same time that they reference equity aims. While the stories that teachers tell construct the students and families within colormuted boundaries, the stories also reflexively create the teachers and their identities as moralized, racialized, gendered, and classed subjects.

This interpretation and explanation of trading stories illuminates the nuances of multiple levels of privilege and positionality, from the status markers within a small teacher group (even though the members are all middle-class White women); to teachers' institutional constraints and authority; to racial hegemony. These nuances afford a dynamic view into the phenomenon of trading stories and middle-class White womanhood, and how middle-class White women teachers' stories can reveal multiple marginalization of students of color.

In addition to producing shared knowledge and understanding about the students, trading stories unearths the middle-class White women teachers' professional expectations, values, and ambiguities. At stake are teachers' and students' educational opportunities and humanization. Stories reveal contradictions as they transmit and construct shared knowledge. How teachers learn to recognize and politicize their social locations and organizational contexts may be the difference between stories that

are told to reassert social distance and moral superiority to benefit the teller, and stories that are used to challenge racial, social class, and gender oppression in schools. Challenging these everyday discourses has significance for teachers' identities, students' experiences, and the larger goal of equitable education.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE OF DATA CONTRIBUTING TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS INTERPRETATIONS

In efforts to provide supporting examples of how the single conversation analyzed in this article can represent, and be interpreted using meanings from, the full data corpus, I present a partial log of the following data excerpts from the semistructured and informal interviews, member check conversations, observation field notes and jottings, and reflection memos (see Table A1). The table includes five instances from interviews and member check conversations, and 10 instances from observations—across participants and settings in the study. Overall, I counted more than 25 instances from the interviews and member check conversations, and more than 40 instances from my observation field notes and jottings, that supported the interpretations of the single conversation I analyzed. All names are pseudonyms.

I include additional information in the table: the data source (e.g., audio recording, field notebook); the participants; and the setting (e.g., classroom, hallway, team meeting). I share this degree of detail to illustrate that the interpretations of the discourse in the single team conversation in the article are supported by the data corpus as a whole, and to illustrate the dimensions of reproducing a discursive repertoire across a professional community.

Shorthand notations include using “Int” to note an interview and “Obs” to note an observation. In addition, analytical codes developed in the second round of coding—and the sections of the findings and interpretations that the data supported—are noted in the far right columns.

Table A1. Partial Log of Data Sources and Instances to Support Interpretation

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
2/12/10	Obs	5th-grade team meeting	<p>“Welcome to Fields”; students at the school “lack thinking, lack effort, lack care—and part of it is the economy, their parents don’t have jobs.” Managing student behavior has been difficult “more this year than I’ve ever had in 11 years.” Descriptions of motivation and engagement strategies, including food rewards. “You’ve got to find out what’s the consequence that matters to them. It’s bribery, are you with me?”</p>	<p>Schoolwide description Student behavior Student motivation & laziness Student social class & poverty Students as animals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parental priorities · Defining boundaries of middle-class White womanhood
2/18/10	Int 1	Ella (4th/5th grade) off campus	<p>Ella, describing a teacher in her school: “She has said she is afraid of 5th graders, they scare her with their behavior and their size. They’re big. They smell, they’re big.”</p>	Fear of students	<p>Establishing social and moral distance Defining boundaries of middle-class White womanhood</p>
3/2/10	Obs	Theresa (2nd grade) hallway/classroom	<p>“Welcome to Highlands, to our clientele” (Theresa says, with a sarcastic/weary huff and a smile) after she stops in hallway to talk to assistant principal about potential [Child Protective Services] referral. “I feel bad for her” (the student).</p>	<p>Colormuteness—“our clientele” Schoolwide description Parenting adequacy & morality Pity for students/families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Morality, criminality, and loss of innocence in low-income families of color

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
3/9/10	Int 1	Theresa (2nd-grade) classroom	<p>"But I do know that when I leave at the end of the day I feel that the kids really like me because they are hugging me and showing me a lot of affection. So I feel like there's a good bond there . . . I do feel that every child can learn, but I do feel that in my opinion, it's not the district's opinion, is that home life has a huge influence on how well a child learns. Because my children who get support from home, obviously, are my higher learners than the ones that don't get support at home. So I do feel it does have some impact on their education."</p>	<p>Care for students & mothering Equity stance Student home life Parenting adequacy & morality Student learning Institutional constraints—social supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parenting priorities
3/9/10	Int 1	Theresa (2nd grade) Classroom	<p>"I know that next year our classes are going up to 28 [students in each class] because of the levy, it didn't pass. So that's going to be more difficult. Our clientele is really difficult because a lot of our kids are low income and they come from homes that are not the safest place. So they come here and there's more behaviors you have to deal with. So maybe just classroom management, just finding different ways to do classroom management besides the stuff I already do, and making sure that every child is learning. . ."</p>	<p>Leadership & institutional constraints—funding Colorfulness—"our clientele" Student social class & poverty Parenting adequacy & morality Student behaviors Student learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Decontextualizing Institutional Constraints

Table A1. Partial Log of Data Sources and Instances to Support Interpretation (continued)

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
3/9/10	Int 1	Theresa (2nd grade) Classroom	<p>"I know that next year our classes are going up to 28 [students in each class] because of the levy, it didn't pass. So that's going to be more difficult. Our clientele is really difficult because a lot of our kids are low income and they come from homes that are not the safest place. So they come here and there's more behaviors you have to deal with. So maybe just classroom management, just finding different ways to do classroom management besides the stuff I already do, and making sure that every child is learning. . ."</p>	<p>Leadership & institutional constraints—funding Colormuteness —“our clientele” Student social class & poverty Parenting adequacy & morality Student behaviors Student learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Decontextualizing Institutional Constraints
3/16/10	Obs Memo	Theresa (2nd grade) hallway/ classroom	<p>"[This student] misses reading every day. Her parents can't seem to get out of bed. She's one of my lowest readers. But so sweet. You can't get any cuter than that. I don't know if there's drug abuse going on or what. . . . Dad looks strung out most of the time. But he seems like such a nice guy." Theresa comments that one would think someone in the front office would call the parents and say something about the tardiness, but no one has. "A lot of things are let go here because of our population. I thought other schools were worse than ours but they aren't, we're the worst."</p>	<p>Parenting adequacy & morality Student home life Student learning Colormuteness —“our population” Leadership and institutional constraints—accountability Schoolwide description Fear of students Student goodness vs. lack of innocence Morality & violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parenting priorities · Morality, criminality, and loss of innocence in low-income families of color · Decontextualizing institutional constraints

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
3/16/10	Obs Memo	Theresa (2nd grade) hallway/ classroom	Theresa continues commenting on student behavior and attendance. "It gets worse as they get older. They're just disrespectful . . . , don't follow authority. . . I wouldn't teach fifth grade here. . . You get a different appreciation for what's 'good' and what's 'bad' once you get a really bad class. If you get a chance to observe the other fifth-grade classrooms up there, even in the hall—we've had guns taken out of backpacks, chairs thrown across the room—that's why I picked second grade."	Parenting adequacy & morality Student home life Student learning Color-muteness—"our population" Leadership and institutional constraints—accountability Schoolwide description Fear of students Student goodness vs. lack of innocence Morality & violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parenting priorities · Morality, criminality, and loss of innocence in low-income families of color · Decontextualizing institutional constraints
3/22/10	Informal Int/ Audio	Ella (4th/5th grade) classroom	Ella intervenes in incident related to racialized name-calling; holds class meeting and creates poster with students, "Names we do not like to be called" and "We would like to be called."	Equity stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Constructing color-muteness as cover for morality

Table A1. Partial Log of Data Sources and Instances to Support Interpretation (continued)

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
3/22/10	Obs Memo	Theresa (2nd grade) classroom	Theresa comments, waiting for a voice-mail to begin, "Hopefully it's not one of my insane parents." She puts the phone on speaker. The voicemail is from a parent with heavily accented English. I comment that it sounds like an Asian accent. Theresa asks, "Whose mom is that? Pound." (<i>whispers to herself to repeat the message</i>). I comment that the accent is Asian. Theresa figures out that it is A—'s mother. "His mom is so nice, but so hard to understand. I thought they were in Vietnam already."	Parent communication & relationships English learners Parenting adequacy & morality	Establishing Social and Moral distance
3/22/10	Obs	4th-grade team lunch off campus	Ella discusses how she describes "the kind of community my school is in" when people ask; she says the school is within two square blocks of "two dollar stores, a Goodwill, a check cashing place, a Mexican market, and an Asian market" . . . she comments positively on the many cuisines in the neighborhood (Mexican, taco trucks, Vietnamese, Thai). She also pointed out a storefront, now with sign removed, where a tanning salon was busted for "providing a lot more services than that, it turns out." She at first misspeaks, calling the former tanning salon a "massage parlor." Ella says all of this with an ironically bright and matter-of-fact voice, a cheerfulness that was not mean, but clearly sarcastic, not noting something happy.	Schoolwide description Colorfulness—"the kind of community" Morality & violence Student social class & poverty Ethnic diversity	· Morality, criminality, and loss of innocence in low-income families of color · Constructing color-muteness as cover for morality

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
3/25/10	Obs	Theresa (2nd-grade) classroom	<p><i>After Family Night, I comment that there were lots of parents, a good turnout. Almost all students' families, maybe 18–20 out of 25, signed in on the sheet as stopping by.</i></p> <p>THERESA: Yeah but see, it was all my good kids, C–, Y–, you know.</p> <p>IRENE: G– came, though.</p> <p>THERESA: Yeah, G–'s a really low reader, but she couldn't be sweeter.</p> <p>Theresa comments on the turnout of the parents, "Some of the parents asked if I can be their teacher next year, so I feel like I've built a good rapport with them."</p>	<p>Parent relationship & communication</p> <p>Student goodness vs. lack of innocence</p>	<p>Parenting and parental priorities</p>
3/26/10	Obs/ Audio	2nd Grade Team	Quoted in paper		
4/24/10	Obs	Theresa (2nd-grade) faculty meeting school library	<p><i>Theresa comments to me on the last time she had a substitute in her classroom. "My last substitute was this middle-aged African American guy who was stressed. He was stressed. He was sweating. He kept scratching his head and saying, 'Ta–, Ta–.' He came in to sub in a suit. We're not in [the major city], but we're considered inner-city, so I was like, have you ever been in an inner-city school before?"</i></p>	<p>Schoolwide student population</p> <p>Colormuteness—"inner city"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Establishing social and moral distance · Constructing color-muteness as cover for morality

Table A1. Partial Log of Data Sources and Instances to Support Interpretation (continued)

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
	Obs	Theresa & Lenore (2nd grade) hallway/classroom	<p><i>On the way back to their classrooms after the whole faculty meeting, Theresa and Lenore (another 2nd-grade teacher) discuss a student and her mother:</i></p> <p>TERESA: J—, and did you see the beautiful outfit she’s wearing but they can’t afford the \$10 for the —</p> <p>LENORE: And they know how to work the system —</p> <p>TERESA: I told my husband I bet I’m going to have a message from J—’s mom telling me where to stick it. But I didn’t.</p>	<p>Student social class & poverty</p> <p>Parenting adequacy & morality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parental priorities · Establishing social and moral distance
	Obs	Theresa (2nd grade) hallway/classroom	<p>Theresa tells me there are horror stories about students with an emotional/behavioral disorder—one of Dani’s students had an episode in which students had to go to another classroom, and Dani and three trained interventionists held the child down.</p>	<p>Fear of students</p> <p>Students with special needs</p>	<p>Morality, criminality, and loss of innocence in low-income families of color</p> <p>Establishing social and moral distance</p>
5/20/10	Obs Memo	Theresa (2nd-grade) hallway/classroom	<p>“I said to [the student M—] you can’t just shut down on me and not do work if you don’t like my decisions for you. Because he does that, he’s like a little spoiled brat. . . his parents have had that problem at home too but they don’t do anything about it because they have six boys it’s like there are so many kids it’s easy just to blow it off. That’s irritating for me too, because whatever practices happen at home spill over on to me.”</p>	<p>Parenting adequacy & morality</p> <p>Student home life</p> <p>Student behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parenting and parental priorities

Date	Data Source	Participant/ Setting	Data Content	Codes	Findings Section
11/30/10	Member Check Int/ Audio	Theresa (2nd-grade) classroom	Well, I know that last night when I was sitting there doing homework with my my kids um, I was thinking wow. I really feel, I mean I think I really honestly feel that things should be done the way that—I mean if we were really to dig deep down (Irene: mmhmm) inside me, I think I feel that things should be done the way I do things. (Irene: mmhmm) (We laugh.) So and, and that made me think that some parents are trying their hardest, you know they're going up against, you know, poverty, they're going up against, like I had one family here, who just disappeared in the middle of the night and went back to Mexico because I think they were going to be deported, (oh) I mean—I can't imagine, that kind of stress, 'cause I've never had to deal with that kind of stress. (Irene: mmhmm) I've always been middle income. Always.	Care & mothering Parenting adequacy & morality Student social class & poverty Pity for students/families Mexico-immigration Counternarratives Pity for students/families	Establishing social and moral distance Defining boundaries of middle-class White womanhood

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