Behind the Mask and beneath the Story:

Enabling Students-Teachers[1] To Reflect Critically on the Socially-Constructed Nature of Their "Normal" Practice

By Virginia Lea & Tom Griggs

Virginia Lea is an associate professor with the School of Education at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California. Tom Griggs is an associate professor with the Division of Exceptionalities and Bilingual/ESL Education in the College of Education at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

In this article, we present our on-going research into two different pedagogical projects within teacher credential courses: one in critical multicultural education and the other in foundations of education. The data were gathered in Northern California and in Colorado. Both projects were designed to help students-teachers become more aware of how they relate to their own students, and of the knowledge that they take for granted as normal. In particular we were interested in the body of knowledge that may be called "cultural whiteness." While the definition of whiteness is variously understood (Howard, 2000; Fine, 1997; Maher & Tetreault, 2001; McIntosh, 1989; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1993), we are focusing in this article, after Hytten and Adkins (1999), on its cultural dimension. Cultural whiteness is a collection of (usually less than conscious) norms, values,

and beliefs, or cultural scripts that function in specific contexts to reproduce the practices and identities that support white institutional privilege and advantage.

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that we, as teachers, tend to privilege students who are like ourselves in racial, class, and cultural terms. If we do not become more conscious of this tendency, we shall not be able to address, and if necessary modify, our role in reproducing current inequities and inequalities in education (Shulman, 1992). A lack of awareness in this area also means that we shall not be able to fully pursue the mission of becoming anti-racist, critical multicultural educators, a goal to which many of us are consciously committed. Given the above tendency, if we are going to meet the needs of all of our students in the classroom, we need to reflect on how our own social and cultural assumptions and our complex and often contradictory identities are influencing our teaching practice. Fulfilling the goal of education for social justice requires that we become self-reflective educators (Freire, 1993).

Of course, teachers, most of whom are white, need to be motivated if they are going to do this self-reflective work. However, motivation is not sufficient for transformative self-reflection to take place. Knowledge is constructed in social interaction. Many if not most of us have never learned to think far outside of the cultural boxes within which we grew up. Some of us took tentative steps to relate to others outside of our cultural boxes as children or young adults. However, as Thandeka (1999) describes, white children are often greeted with censure by their parents when their opinions don't reflect the parents' attitudes toward minorities, friends, or others in their social networks, and fearing the loss of these significant others, they retreat. Unless all people are offered, in a supportive environment, alternative ways of conceptualizing, feeling, and experiencing the world, we shall not be able to see the relative and culturally positioned nature of our own consciousness and knowledge. Nor shall we be able to question what we have come to think of as normal in terms of how we define 'the good student' and legitimate educational knowledge.

In this article, we use the term 'cultural scripts' to refer to the different images and messages manifested in our relations with others, in books and other media, and in institutional procedures and public policy that influence how we think, feel, and act in the world (Gee, 2000).[2] We actively interpret these cultural scripts that we meet in social contexts in ways that make sense to us, and we make these interpretations our own. Some cultural scripts are ubiquitous, representing the shared socio-economic interests of the most powerful individuals and groups in our society. Because these scripts are so dominant and omnipresent, we often—less than consciously—make *them* our own. This process occurs even when we see ourselves as representing alternative cultural scripts.

The two projects discussed in this paper attempt to contribute to resolving this now familiar dilemma in teacher education—bridging the gap between teacher intentions and practice that is shaped not by these intentions but by cultural scripts

of which we are less than aware. In other words, the shared goal of both projects is to help educators to become aware of their own "hidden curriculum." Both projects aim to help students-teachers and teacher educators raise questions about self, society, and power so that we can embark on the journey of self-awareness necessary to addressing all of our students' needs.

Choosing the Right Lens to See and Attain Our Goal

In embarking on a journey, it is always helpful to develop a theoretical map. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1996) provided us, as teacher educators, important background information as we developed our theoretical map. They reminded us that many important thinkers have addressed the complex issue of what makes up human subjectivity, and of how that subjectivity is connected to how we relate to each other.

Another important contributor to our map is Michel Foucault (Foucault in Rabinow, 1984), who gave us insight into the on-going process by which our subjectivities, or the ways in which we know ourselves, are socially and historically formed. His notion of genealogy "describes the process of tracing the formation of our own subjectivities" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996, p. 176). Indeed, when we teachers identify the "ambiguities and contradictions in the construction of [our] own subjectivities," we are in a better position to understand our students' "complexities of consciousnesses" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996, p. 176). We are in a better position to avoid "arrogant perception" (Salvio, 1998)—thinking of ourselves as possessing the truth, as harboring the only legitimate way of understanding and moving through the world.

Without an understanding of the history of the political, socioeconomic, and cultural webs in which we currently live, we are caught like flies in what Clifford Geertz (1973) called "webs of significance" (p.5). We are not able to fully understand the 'what' and the 'why' of our identities. We are not able to fully appreciate why we think, feel and act in the world as we do. We are not able to act to change that part of self and reality that contradicts our intent.

In attempting to know ourselves we must therefore look at our own histories. Histories are our personal stories looked at through multiple lenses—political, socioeconomic, and cultural (Goodson, 1998). William Pinar's notion of *currere* has been an important signpost in helping us look at these histories. Currere is "the Latin root of the word 'curriculum,' meaning the investigation of the nature of the individual experience of the public" (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 129). When we look back at our lives we must ask ourselves, "In thinking that I have chosen a particular view of the world in which I live, how has my private perception been shaped by wider cultural and institutional realities?"

The signpost built with Pinar's help in turn pointed us towards the kind of post-formal thinking that allows us to become conscious of our multiple, "culturally created" selves, and of the arbitrary boundaries that exist between categories of

knowledge in which we place people and the environment. It helps us to see that we socially construct selective reality in our interactions with others, and that we are often responsible for reproducing inequalities, even if we do so less than consciously (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996, p.176). In terms of these interactions, Bakhtin enabled us to understand that even when we experience ourselves as individuals who possess a single occupancy of our own minds and make our own unique meanings, communication between human beings is "characterized by a dialogicality of voices: when a speaker produces an utterance, at least two voices can be heard simultaneously" (Wertsch, 1991, p.13). Our minds are always crowded. We actively mediate and make meaning of the information that we receive in this very complex environment.

The related theoretical fields of critical multiculturalism and teacher education have also buoyed our work. In the former field, Sonia Nieto (1999) encouraged teachers to become multicultural educators. She argued that when we do, we cannot avoid challenging the oppressive dimensions of the schooling process that our students face, which include "realities such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other biases" (p.157). Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1993) work on teacher research and knowledge clarified for us how teachers can practice in a post-formal, multicultural space: "Teachers and students negotiate what counts as knowledge in the classroom, who can have knowledge, and how knowledge can be generated, challenged and evaluated" (p.45). We believe that the context for this negotiation, this social construction of meaning, is always one of power. The teacher and students-teachers inhabit roles that allow them to wield far greater power than their students in the classroom. However, they are also constrained by mandates handed down by the school principal, the school district, and the state. When they step outside of prescribed roles, teachers may be censured by their respective institutions and/or parents. They may be both oppressors and oppressed at the same time (Freire, 1993). Cochran-Smith and Lytle helped us to see how this reality may be mediated once we understand how knowledge and relations of power are socially constructed. They tell us that "through inquiry, teachers can come to understand how . . . [knowledge is constructed] in their classrooms and how their own interpretations of classroom events are shaped" (p.45).

Finally, there are several excellent studies of how we may address cultural whiteness in teacher education. For example, in her essay, "Underground discourses: Exploring whiteness in teacher education," Pearl Rosenberg (1997) joined a growing community of teacher educators who are reiterating "the need for autobiographical disclosure in academic work and teaching" (p.79). It is work that bell hooks has called "engaged pedagogy" (1994). Rosenberg stated that "since there is no prescription for engaged pedagogy, we must all negotiate our own knowledge, authority, and experience around these issues with ourselves as well as our students, taking care to recognize the contextual nature of this work" (p.87). Rosenberg went on to suggest that in the current political context, in which "many with power" believe that issues of race and racism have been "already settled," the

individualized, isolated nature of teaching mitigates against open, cross-campus dialogue about whiteness. Rosenberg wants to resuscitate the notion of "underground" as not just subversive, but "as a site of unity, of control, of freedom—a fertile place, only shameful under patriarchy" (pp. 87-88).

In what follows, we describe our own attempts to set up such sites—the one "behind the mask," the other, "beneath the story"—so that we may reach our stated goal.

Project One: Tom Griggs

The Role of Mask-Making in Discovering Teachers' Senses of Self as Cultural Beings

This assignment has been developed and used primarily in courses in which the issues addressed by it are but one of a wide range of topics related generally to teaching and/or teaching in multicultural and multilingual contexts. These courses are either general foundations of education courses (similar to "Introduction to Teaching" courses offered at many institutions), or courses introducing broad foundational knowledge to students embarking on programs in Crosscultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD), which are intended to prepare future and practicing teachers to better meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. As such, this particular assignment was developed with the intention of making tangible students' emerging senses of identity and of selves as cultural beings.

While these matters are of particular interest to this teacher educator, they are but a few of a multitude of topics addressed in these course. The broad range of course content in both these program contexts (e.g., legal, historical, philosophical, sociological, methodological matters in education, learning and second language acquisition theory, to name a few) has had a limiting effect on both the degree of exposure to and class discussion of the issues raised by the assignment, as well as on the extent of analysis of its impact while students-teachers are undertaking it. This stands in sharp contrast to the context in which the Cultural Portfolio assignment used in Virginia Lea's "Multicultural Education and the Social Sciences" course occurred, as described in the next major section of this paper.

The conception of this assignment came about largely as a result of my own personal professional history as an actor before moving into the field of teacher education. In my acting training, I had a significant background in *commedia dell'arte*, a popular Italian Renaissance theatrical form, and this background has strongly affected my conceptualization of this assignment. Commedia is characterized by broad physical comedy enacted by players who roamed Europe, and especially France, from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries (Towsen, 1976). These players made and wore half-masks with exaggerated facial features, and each mask came to symbolize one of the stock characters in a myriad of stories enacted again and again as improvisations by these traveling troupes of players.

The plot lines for the commedia performances (many of which apparently had origins tracing back to much earlier Roman comedies) were very familiar to their audiences, and the characters were recognizable because of the features of their masks and their extremely exaggerated physicalizations, including farcical walks, struts, and stances. In this sense, commedia was simply another iteration of what Schechner (1988) refers to as "theatrical and other forms of ritual performance," which have in common "a basic structure which consists of gathering, performing, and dispersing" (pp. 168-169). By this definition, teaching and learning can also be viewed as kinds of ritual performance, and schools can be seen as the theaters in which these performances take place. Promoting this conception of teachers' work among my students is one reason for asking them to complete this particular assignment.

In commedia dell'arte, it would be fair to say that these masks and physicalizations interacted with each other, so that the masks "informed" the rest of the characters' physicality, and these in combination conveyed important information to the audience about the nature of the characters. Similarly, in a teaching context, I might assume an authoritative stance if I wish to convey that I know my subject matter well, or a cool, strict manner if I want to exert control over an unruly classroom. In turn, these stances I take shape my own physical behavior, and my attitudes toward others—as well as others' attitudes toward me—in the classroom. It is this last quality of the interaction between mask and player that forms the basis for the particular conception of masks intended in this assignment. This notion of masks as manipulable, as constantly subject to change as intention, circumstances, and/or conscious or unconscious decision-making about them permit or dictate—and in some sense as a reflection/function of how others perceive the "wearer"—is complex. It combines elements of Goffman's (1959) notion of "the presentation of self in everyday life," Gallop's (1995) notion of impersonation, and even Peirce's (1995) definition of social identity (although in the latter case, the concept is used to refer to the social identity of learners, specifically).

At the same time I attempt as a teacher to identify "masks" I wear as a professional, using the preceding conceptions of them, I also want to explore and reflect upon my reactions to doing so and on how these masks shape me as a teacher. In keeping with Diamond's (1991) stated goal of "perspective transformation in teacher education (PTTE)," the mask assignment is used to foster such transformation among my students, as well as within myself, as a teacher educator with specialized interests in critical multicultural education and cross-cultural teaching. I see this as especially relevant to making in-service and prospective teachers aware of their identities as cultural beings, and to initiating understanding of the implications of these identities for their teaching effectiveness in diverse contexts. Another important yet less explicit goal is to awaken students-teachers' awareness about their potential for agency in teaching for social justice, and of the ways in which their multiple identities—the many "masks" they wear—can help or hinder this goal.

In the course syllabus, I describe the mask assignment as an attempt to help students get a sense of their own personal and professional identities and to make these identities more tangible to them. I describe identity as being comprised of both "how we wish to present and perceive ourselves, as well as [of] how others perceive us," and explain that I want the masks to capture both these aspects of their identities. In their masks, some students ultimately integrate elements of the two aspects in one global image, some split the masks into two sides, one reflecting each of them, and still others present the two aspects as being in conflict or in opposition to one another. The decision about how to represent the relationship between these two aspects of their identities is left with the artist who creates the mask.

There is no attempt to describe the assignment much further than this, although the students are told both that they can use any medium they wish to create their masks, and they will receive full credit for the assignment if they commit themselves to fully engaging in its completion. Instead, by way of further explanation of what I want them to do, I have accumulated many of these masks over the last several years, and I share with my students some of the products of their predecessors' efforts to complete the assignment. The choice of media is rooted in the idea that the intuitive, self-reflective, artistic process involved in its creation will make it less threatening, and perhaps even rewarding to explore cultural identity. For this reason, I view allowing students to make these artistic decisions related to executing the assignment as instrumental to the promotion of self-awareness that is the central goal of the assignment.

Overwhelmingly, students enjoyed doing the assignment once they became engaged in the process of creating the mask, although many also complained that they were either procrastinating in completing it because they were uncomfortable about or lacked confidence in their artistic abilities or felt otherwise unsure about how they wanted to execute it. For example:

> I really didn't expect this assignment to be as enlightening as it was! Although I keep a journal and consider myself fairly introspective, the last time I looked at the picture of my teaching practice was when I first began teaching, before I had any real experience. So I was interested and excited (and maybe a bit reluctant) to take on the challenge of how I am perceived and how I perceive myself. I learned several things from completing the assignment.

This sort of global comment about the assignment was very common; many other students also commented that they felt they had learned a lot from it in other ways. Some mentioned that they might wish to use the assignment in their own P-12 classrooms, and many stated that they were surprised at what they had learned.

Among the "lessons" students indicated they had learned were the rediscovery of some long-hidden artistic passion or talent and its meaning to the artist, as well as the value of doing art (as opposed to doing so much writing and reading), especially at the post-secondary level. For example, one student wrote:

> I enjoyed the challenge of making the mask. In particular, I enjoyed trying out different approaches and media for expressing character duality. I finally settled on tracing a picture my fifth grader made in school, an attempt (pretty successful on her behalf) to mimic Picasso's style. Her portrait was rendered in tempera paints, mine in construction paper.

Another student commented similarly:

> I enjoyed deciding which words and images to use for the mask to portray my message. Images work best for me, partly because they allow for the fact that, even among students who come to see in me more than just the surface image, no one will see me in exactly the same way. This experience is an invaluable one for anyone, whether for the first time as an adult, or to revisit it again. It is easy to forget about who we are versus what we appear to be on the surface.

Many wrote of coming to a realization and a deepening of empathy and understanding about how hard it is for students to be successful in the public schools who either haven't demonstrated high levels of what Gardner (1983) calls "linguistic intelligence," who are visual learners, or who are among those that cannot claim native English language as an asset.

For those students who were most readily able to grasp the potential value of the assignment for their own learning as students of teaching, the following reaction to it captured much of the scope of the goals for self-reflection that it was intended to promote.

> I was intrigued with this assignment from the beginning of class, since every single day I liken the experience [of teaching] in my mind to being on stage. It is part of how I describe my job to non-teachers. I always feel I am "on," every minute of the day in the classroom. I often plan my lessons right down to a mental script of what I'll say (so concepts will be clearly understood and there will be logical sequence to my thoughts and directions). I even plan out and visualize my actions ahead of time: putting up a poster, writing on the overhead, etc. I think through what "props" I'll need so the lesson will flow smoothly (manipulatives, chart stand, transparencies, etc.). I estimate the amount of time I'll need for each "scene," so transitions will be smooth from one activity to the next. These are just some of the ways in which teaching reminds me of acting on stage.
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> In doing the mask project I learned that there are some aspects or "faces" of my identity which I do not feel free or willing to expose to my primary age students, and some sides of me that I share with them intentionally, out of a human need to make them see I am more than just their third grade teacher. I realized too that I am under constant observation, not only by my students, but by parents, other teachers, principal, and other administrative staff. My classroom is a very public place. I feel there are many expectations for my behavior and performance coming from all directions.
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> It was an eye-opener for me to reflect on how different audiences may perceive me in different ways, and that how I think I may be perceived may be very different from how I am perceived. I feel a lot of pressure to be a role model, a paragon of virtue,

> an exemplary U.S. citizen and patriot, a surrogate mother, endlessly patient and positive and in control, and other things I cannot be all the time. I try to present myself in these ways, but am sure some of my audiences must see through my mask to my underlying doubts, frustrations, and confusion. I have been teaching full-time in the classroom for three years, and still haven't found a way to avoid cheating my family, my health, and my outside interests as I strive for excellence as a teacher. As I did this project I realized how imperative it is that I strike a healthier balance between my roles and identity parts. I need to find ways to know I am doing my job well so that I don't have to feel so driven by others' expectations.

It is clear from the hundreds of masks and responses to making them that have resulted from this assignment that it has had a profound impact on the thinking of many students-teachers who have completed it, about their roles in classrooms, schools, and society, in general. From the course instructor's perspective, however (at least during the immediate term during which the assignment is completed), students-teachers' work on this assignment doesn't frequently enough seem to reach the level of "perspective transformation in teacher education" (Diamond, 1991) intended and/or hoped for with regard to their conceptions of their own white cultural identities. This is particularly true with respect to their explicitly understanding cultural whiteness at a deeper level, although there is some question how clearly I am seeing things here myself and whether this is necessarily an accurate observation. It is important to note that my own analysis presents one of the contexts in which the persistence of the invisibility of white culture is made manifest as a potential distortion to perception, in my own case as much as in that of my students. To what extent is this perceived lack of transformation attributable to students missing the point in their execution of the assignment, and to what extent can it be ascribed to the invisibility of my culture even to me, as a member, reproducer, and agent of the dominant white culture?

Mask-Making—Final Thoughts

In general, for many of my White students-teachers in particular, this assignment begins the process of awakening their consciousness about their cultural identities. As stated earlier, it is rooted in the idea that the intuitive, self-reflective, artistic process involved in its creation will make it less threatening, and perhaps even rewarding to explore cultural identity. It is also intended to make the fact of cultural identity more tangible and concrete for these students-teachers, especially those who are hindered by the invisibility of their culture to themselves, a phenomenon discussed in many works about White cultural identity in the sociopolitical context of the U. S. (e.g., Howard, 1999; McIntosh, 1989). In this sense, the assignment succeeds for many students, on some fundamental levels. On many others, however, it seems to be a question of barely scratching the surface of this identity awareness and development.

As I compare this assignment to Virginia Lea's (which is described in the next

section of this paper) in terms of its effectiveness as a teaching tool about these concepts, I see several contrasts in the way the two assignments are structured and the context in which they are assigned and completed that might explain the variations in and the variability of the outcomes reported in relation to the two assignments. The assignment may be too open-ended, in terms of the way it is presented to students, and in terms of the fact that it does not have the more comprehensive and systematic theoretical links characterized by Virginia's Cultural Portfolio assignment. Also, because it occurs in the curricular context it does (i.e., among several other assignments and a vast array of diverse content being addressed), students-teachers do not get many opportunities to visit and revisit the concepts and reflect on our cultural identities in the profound way Virginia's assignment seems to allow. As long as these conditions remain, it might ultimately be too much to expect this assignment to have more than the awakening effect it has, and to provide much more than the first steps to the critical multicultural awareness we are both seeking to foster among our students-teachers.

Project Two: Virginia Lea

The Cultural Portfolio

Building on Paula Salvio's work (1998), this assignment was developed for my "Multicultural Education and the Social Sciences" course as a way of helping my students-teachers to question why they think, feel, and act as they do in the classroom, and in their related, wider social encounters and private lives. Most importantly, I ask them to consider how their thinking, feeling, and acting impacts their students. To what extent are these domains shaped by cultural scripts of which they are less-than-conscious? The students-teachers are also asked to develop a greater awareness of their social identities that Stuart Hall (1993) tells us come from outside. They develop this awareness by investigating why other people identify them in particular ways, and how this social identity relates to their complex, private sense of who they are.

About every 2 weeks for 10 weeks of the course, students-teachers construct personal narratives in response to specific categories of knowledge and experience such as culture, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion. They then post these stories to WebCT, a web-based interactive forum. They write at least six of their own narratives, and respond to at least six of their peers' stories. When students-teachers are not writing their own narratives, they respond to each other's on line, with comments or questions, encouraging the author to look at his or her story from alternative perspectives, to become more aware of the socially constructed nature of that perspective. The stories may be part of a family history or represent a life-changing or literacy event that helped the student to "read the world" (Freire, 1993) and not just "the word," in a whole new way. From week 10 to week 14 of the course, the students-teachers are asked to revisit one or more of their stories in the light of the critical multicultural or other theoretical lenses that they have met

during the semester. During the second-to-last course session, students-teachers share one of these re-considered narratives with the class, naming the cultural scripts that they have identified as having shaped their narrated experiences. The whole process is a period of revelation and liberation for some students, of uncovering underground spaces in their own consciousness, and of subverting the dominant cultural web in which they feel they have previously been caught.

If students cannot easily remember a story associated with one of the above-mentioned categories, I suggest that they think of a material item or symbol suggested by the category. This suggestion is based on the theoretical idea that our personal memories are socially situated (Gee, 2000), and that concrete items, images, smells, and symbols may be seen as clues to or "locations" for our private, ideologically pregnant narratives (Salvio, 1998). I try to illustrate the process with stories of my own. As a white, middle-class woman, married to an African American man, who only learned about her part-Arab heritage by accident when she was 12 years old, my stories are sometimes alien and intimidating to some of the white students-teachers who see their lives as devoid of culture, and who on some level of consciousness harbor guilt about their own white privilege. However, I try to help them recognize the complexity of their own ethnic makeup and how I am struggling to recognize my own cultural whiteness. As is also true of the mask assignment described above by Tom, the cultural portfolio, along with the readings, dialogue, videos and simulations offered in the course, has enabled many of my white students to recognize that they do have a rich and positive ethnic culture. As Macedo and Bartholome (1999) write: "The hidden assumption is that white is colorless, a proposition that is semantically impossible. By pointing out that white is also a color, we can begin to interrogate the false assumptions that strip white people of their ethnicity" (p. 15). The realization that we all have value as cultural beings is very important if those of us who embody whiteness and receive white privilege are to actively challenge these social and cultural dimensions of ourselves. Without such a sense of value, as Helms' stages of building a positive white identity suggest (Tatum, 1997), white people have no secure foundation upon which to recognize a more contradictory and potentially liberating sense of self—one that has addressed culturally transmitted and socially embedded cultural whiteness. For example, at the end of one semester, Belinda, a white woman in her twenties, wrote in her cultural portfolio:

> Ever since we were given the first assignment, I have been reassessing how I think about my own culture and ethnicity . . . Despite having learned a lot more about my ancestors, what has come out of this process is a deeper understanding that "culture" and to some extent "ethnicity" are passed down through actions, behaviors, stories, attitudes, values, and a whole multitude of characteristics…I am grateful for having had the opportunity to explore this issue more deeply and I am certain that I will more consciously think about my own "culture" in a new light from here on out. One of the things that Virginia said this semester that stuck with me is, "We all have our feet in more than one pond." To me this means that the way

> we or others define ourselves is never neat and tidy. None of us fits into just one category or box . . . As my own knowledge of Spanish gets better, I find myself gaining a culture as well. I currently have friends who speak very little English and I feel that my life is so much fuller and richer as a result of being able to cross into that world through language.

I work with the students-teachers to set up a classroom context in which they all feel reasonably comfortable sharing their personal stories. This is important in meeting the goals of the cultural portfolio since many students-teachers are aware that their stories may lay bare their racism, classism, sexism, and their white, male, and class privilege, which at least on a rhetorical level they deplore. In order to overcome this hurdle, I encourage them to see that while these cultural scripts may have informed their identities and practice on some level in the past, they do not have to influence their current identities and practice. If we look through the critical theoretical lens that allows us to see knowledge as something that is constructed socially, we can see the possibilities of engaging in the difficult, subversive act of reconstructing some of the ways in which we think about, feel and act towards our students and the educational process in general. This perspective gives many students-teachers, striving to develop new ways of teaching for social justice, a strong sense that they can do something to change the world, beginning with themselves. They can rethink the cultural scripts that they bring to the classroom in favor of alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. They can "re-vision" the limited socially constructed categories that have been presented to them in their schooling and elsewhere as default paradigms for understanding the world. They can see their life stories from multiple perspectives, and ultimately reconceive their identities. Some of my students-teachers see greater possibility for questioning, challenging, and remaking curricula texts, as well as the texts of their lives, especially those that seem to contradict their best intentions. Official versions of history become visible as socially constructed accounts of the past, drawing on specific data, leaving out other information, and reflecting power relations.

Beneath the Story

In the following discourse analysis of the stories written by my students-teachers during one semester in 2001, I have assumed a link between the ideologies located in our cultural scripts and the structures that we adopt to express these scripts in verbal and written texts. These texts signal how we position ourselves and our ideas within the socio-economic hierarchy (Gee, 1996). That is to say, although we are not fully conscious of the process, the particular prepositions, nouns, metaphors, themes and the grammatical constructions that we employ may have ideological significance. Norman Fairclough (1992) writes that "the meanings of texts are closely intertwined with the forms of texts, and formal features of texts at various levels may be ideologically invested" (p. 91). Texts are also related to our particular genealogies that in turn are situated within and shaped by wider historical realities.

To illustrate this form of discourse analysis, I am using an example from a previous study that I undertook with eight teachers in Northern California (Lea, 1998). These teachers had volunteered to work with me to identify the hidden cultural scripts influencing their teaching practice. In this example, "Jennifer," one of my white, upper middle-class students-teachers, is talking about the first time she became aware of race. She describes a time in grade school when she brought a black school friend home to play. Even though she can not remember the details and believes that her mother said very little, she does remember that what transpired left her in no doubt that *"it was a division there of who I was allowed to play with and who I wasn't."* Note that Jennifer uses a pronoun, *"it,"* instead of naming her mother as the agent of her separation from her friend. She also avoids naming who had authority over her but the verb, "to allow," used in the passive tense leaves little doubt that she felt the power of that authority—"*who I was allowed to play with*." Not wanting to be divided from her mother, Jennifer felt she had no choice but to obey her mother's wishes, to interpret racial segregation as normal, and to stay on the "right" side of the racial divide. Given the ideological significance of race, it seems that Jennifer remains profoundly influenced by this experience in which mother-child bonding became overlaid with what Christine Sleeter called "white bonding" (Sleeter, 1993). Jennifer' first experience with race is similar to those of the subjects in Thandeka's (1999) study, mentioned earlier in this article.

Categorizing the Socially-Constructed Nature of "Normal" Practice

In analyzing the cultural portfolio reflections from one of my courses in 2001, I realized that my students-teachers' responses might be placed into categories similar to those that emerged from a research project undertaken by McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001). In this study, students were asked to read Peggy McIntosh's (1989) article, entitled *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.* McIntosh described twenty-six ways in which she receives institutionalized privilege as a white person—privilege that is not available for people of color—as she lives her everyday life in the United States. Before the students began reading, about one half of them were given a lecture on and an experience of cognitive dissonance. This gave them some preparation for their potentially negative emotional reaction to the reading, and some prior insight into how they might navigate similar emotions if they arose out of reading assignments. The other half was given no such information or experience.

The informational scripts or categories of content promoted in McFalls and Cobb-Roberts' course were intended "to increase understanding and appreciation for the ways in which diversity has shaped American culture, social institutions and intergroup relations." The information included "categories of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, religion, language and exceptionality" (p. 164). McFalls and Cobb-Roberts uncovered three themes embedded in the responses of both groups to these informational scripts:

1. "Awareness" reflected cultural scripts, expressed by students-teachers, that were consonant with the informational scripts presented in the course;

2. "Uncertainty" reflected cultural scripts, expressed by students-teachers, that were only partially consistent with the informational scripts presented in the course; and

3. "Denial" reflected cultural scripts that were dissonant with the informational scripts presented in the course.

My own course was not an educational foundations' course and the informational scripts were focused to a greater extent on anti-racist, critical multicultural pedagogy (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2002). Nevertheless, I decided to use their categories for the following reasons:

- They emerged out of discourse analysis of my students-teachers' narratives;
- They represented a pattern that I have perceived in the responses of my students over the last ten years of my experience as a teacher educator; and
- The breadth of the categories offered a very broad canvas on which I could address the complexity of the students-teachers' cultural scripts;
- Using existing categories allows us to build on each other's research and thus construct a body of knowledge concerning a particular issue.

However, given the theoretical map that Tom and I adopted to guide our analyses in this joint project, I am very aware that using McFalls and Cobb-Roberts categories was not the only way of understanding the cultural scene represented by the cultural portfolio. The following very general categories do not represent the only patterns that emerged from the data.

An "Awareness" Story from the Cultural Portfolio

This category includes those cultural scripts expressed by students who may not have been aware (some were very aware) in a critical multicultural sense at the beginning of my "Multicultural Education and the Social Sciences" course but who had begun to reflect seriousl*y* on their level of awareness by the end of the course. Seven out of nineteen students fell into this category; two of them were Chicana (the only students of color in the course) and five of them were white. The Chicana students-teachers came to my class with a lived understanding of race, which from time to time they generously contributed to the class and which increased the awareness of their white peers. In the interest of space, I am only presenting the stories of some of the white students-teachers, whose inquiry into their cultural whiteness was a relatively novel experience, and who were assisted by the cultural portfolio process to engage in this inquiry.

Belinda wrote in her narrative about her experience growing up in Minnesota in a segregated world and how her racial norm was only disrupted when, as a child

on a visit to the South, she wandered into a black neighborhood on the way to the store. Returning to her grandmother's house, Belinda told her grandmother and parents of her experience. Just as in Jennifer's story and the stories reported by Thandeka (1999), Belinda learned from her adult relations that proximity to black people was wrong. It was not until college that she connected with a person of color again—this time deliberately. She developed a friendship with a bi-racial female student who had been adopted by a white family. However, when this friendship ended she developed the idea, born out of the confusion of her childhood experience, that she could never have a friendship with a person of color.

Belinda grew up, like so many white people including Jennifer and Thandeka's (1999) research subjects, bonded to a white group consisting of family and community that gained much of its 'goodness' in relation to the perceived 'otherness' of people of color. Many long treatises, dealing with the history of race, racism, and white privilege in the United States have been written on this subject (Lipsitz, 1998; Roediger, 1991). Many white people in the South (and the North) have traditionally related to people of color—often less than consciously—with distrust, fear, and, in particular, a sense of African and indigenous American inferiority, drawing on pseudo-scientific racist ideology. This response may be called cultural whiteness, as the consequence to this day has been to reinforce institutional barriers that prevent people of color from gaining positions of power and potentially influencing change in the social structure of the dominant cultural world. The corollary of this outcome has been to reproduce relative white privilege.

Within the limited time in my course, we addressed the above-mentioned history in relation to African American people and people of color in general. We also talked about the development of white identity (Tatum, 1997) in order to help Belinda and her peers sort out how their own experiences of cultural whiteness might continue to impact their relationships with Black students and students of color in her classroom. Michael Apple's (1993) insights into the way in which we use ideology to reproduce our own privilege were also helpful. We take certain limited truths and, if we perceive it to be in our own interest, we (usually less-than-consciously) weave these truths into a story that we apply to a whole category of people. In this way, Belinda's (and Jennifer's) family drew on stereotypical, negative myths about African American people (Bogle, 1989) to legitimize what they considered to be a necessary physical, social and cultural divide between them and their daughter. Having told her stories and read the responses to them, Belinda then wrote:

> I think it is really important to question and acknowledge that our society truly is not equal and that often times we, as White people in the dominant culture, may be perpetuating the suppression and unintentionally acting in ways that may appear racist to groups of people who are not part of the dominant culture. I hope to reach out to all of my students and provide them with the knowledge and support to confront these issues. I believe that by sharing my experiences and not running

> away from the challenges that confronting race and racism embody that I will be a stronger teacher and better able to reach my students.

An "Uncertainty" Story from the Cultural Portfolio

This category includes those cultural scripts expressed by students who were not aware in a critical multicultural sense at the beginning of my "Multicultural Education and the Social Sciences" course but who had begun to reflect somewhat on their level of awareness by the end of the course. I have placed all of the remaining twelve students-teachers (all of them white) in this category, although four of them were, at times, very resistant to considering the merit of a critical multicultural lens.

Asked about her race/ethnicity, "Tina" writes about discovering after his death that her great grandfather had come from Lithuania when in life the family had all understood he was Polish. When asked by another student if she thought her "grandparents felt ashamed about who they were," Tina responded:

> If I am asked about my heritage, I typically say I'm Austrian and Lithuanian (I'm a quarter of each). *The impression I have of my Lithuanian grandparents is that they were not ashamed of their heritage, but that their children were.* None of their culture made its way through the generations to me. I am much more familiar with my German heritage…

While I encouraged Tina to explore the social and cultural scripts that may have shaped her parents' shame, she declined to do so. Nevertheless, out of her exploration of her heritage, Tina became more aware of the importance of a sense of identity with success in school. She writes:

> I have come to the conclusion that all humans have a need to belong. This need is deeper and more multi-faceted than simply being white or American, for example. Belonging gives a sense of safety, which my background in biology influences me to believe is based in the fact that there is safety (from enemies or predators) in numbers…Students who have not developed a sense of identity may feel unsafe, and unsure of themselves. They may find they have trouble "fitting in." I know that I have found it easier to assert myself in social situations since I have developed a more solid sense of who I am. Students need to understand themselves on all levels to develop their own identity and to therefore know their own worth. *A sense of worth and security can help students to succeed academically.*

While Tina embraces multiculturalism in the sense of wanting students to feel culturally validated, she is not ready to engage in an inquiry into the ways in which the dominant social structure is represented in her own ideological outlook on the world (Sleeter, 1993). She is certainly not ready to embrace the kind of culture shock necessary to disrupt this "social structure within." Tina's dominant theoretical lens is one through which the school is not viewed as a source of institutionalized inequities but as a functional place that students need to fit into in order to be

successful (Bennett DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). She believes that students need to develop a unified identity that will support this process. On the other hand, a critical multicultural educational framework is one in which multiple subjectivities are validated, and the school is seen as a place that should affirm students' multiple social and cultural knowledge, enabling them to produce knowledge while meeting challenging academic standards, and to develop the ability to critique themselves and the world in which they live. (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1994). While, like most of us, Tina saw herself as democratic and working for social justice, she did not become aware during the semester that her views represented a theoretical lens that supported the status quo.

Cultural Portfolio Denial Stories

While I did not place any of the students-teachers in this category, I was tempted to include "Carla," whose thinking seemed to barely touch an understanding of how or why it was important for teachers to think from multiple perspectives. Also, a few of my students-teachers did let me know in my evaluations that they were angry with me for suggesting that they, like myself, had the power to oppress their students, and for arguing that this possibility warrants close examination of the cultural scripts that inform our practice. I related this emotional reaction to the disintegration and reintegration stages in Helms' typology of the development of a positive white identity. It is my view that these students-teachers were struggling under the weight of my course that included a critique of white privilege and cultural whiteness. Still taking this critique personally, they were struggling to hold on to or arrive at a positive sense of their identities. (Tatum, 1997).

The Cultural Portfolio—Final Thoughts

One of the problems with any research project that focuses exclusively on what we say that we do is, to borrow Tom's conception of it, the problem of the human capacity to wear ideological masks. These masks often belie our practice and hide, even from ourselves, deeper-seated cultural scripts that shape this practice. We rationalize, rationalize, rationalize, to avoid looking at what gives us pain and discomfort. This is why a methodological approach to discourse analysis that tries to find how our deep-seated cultural scripts are embedded in the language that we use is so important.

Like any assignment, the cultural portfolio is a process. Students who have already done significant work on recognizing the social and cultural contexts on which they draw to fashion their current thoughts, feelings, and actions are usually better able and/or inclined to explore contentious, politically charged scripts—scripts that deal with issues of culture, race, language, ethnicity, gender, and class in particular. Nevertheless, I have found the cultural portfolio, in combination with other course activities, to be a valuable part of a teacher education effort to facilitate the kind of self reflection and awareness necessary to becoming a culturally responsive,

critical multicultural teacher. I also believe that I must be facilitating the process more effectively as a greater number of students are at least rhetorically embracing a critical multicultural stance as each semester goes by. I am currently identifying further the ways in which I am transforming my own cultural whiteness in order for this to happen. As teacher educators, we are not exempt from being key factors in facilitating the journey of our students-teachers to self-reflection, awareness, and political action.

Behind the Mask and Beneath the Story: Conclusion

Both Tom and Virginia are focusing on ways to enable their disproportionately white students-teachers to see more clearly the nature of their subjectivities, which are associated with student practice in private and public contexts such as the school. In our everyday lives, we tend to wear masks or persona shaped by the demands of public, ideological cultural scripts, and by the roles we play in these scripts. These scripts indicate how we should behave in order to belong, to avoid rejection, to be successful, and to keep our jobs in a particular cultural web. While people of color are often very aware that they are "fronting," or putting on a mask in order to get by in a world defined to a large extent by white supremacy, white people are often unaware that they are wearing persona. The consumer-oriented, media-dominated cultural web, largely constructed and benefiting middle- to upper-class white people, increasingly saturates the entire world. It takes a culture shock, a disruption of the norm, to enable some people to question what they take for granted (Bourdieu, 1994). We are all less than conscious of what feels normal or familiar to us, what is represented to us as our own. Even a social world riddled with contradictions may seem normal, and the act of acting may seem a fair trade-off in order to retain a job, or achieve a goal.

Tom asks his students-teachers to recognize the ways in which they succumb to this process: to ask themselves why, how, and when they put on these masks or personae, and how the mask actually ends up defining their behavior. Virginia's assignment is perhaps more effective in helping students separate their individual, personal selves from the public identities that they experience as authentic and not socially constructed (Pinar, 1998). For Virginia, then, this identity is artificial (Pinar, 1998). In both views, we construct our identities in response to the exigencies of social interaction and wear them in public. Virginia tries to create a context in which students feel comfortable disrupting each other's taken-for-granted assumptions by asking each other questions or making comments that identify the public nature of the personal stories that students share about, for example, culture, race, class, and gender. In other words, students create for each other controlled cultural dissonance or culture shock, are aware that this is going to happen, and understand what emotions to expect. In this respect, Virginia's study is similar to that of McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001), as are her results.

Tom's and Virginia's class assignments are therefore complementary. They

both set as their goal enabling students-teachers to reflect critically on the socially constructed nature of their *normal* practice. Tom's assignment can be seen as a way that instructors in the field of critical multicultural teacher education can encourage their students-teachers to take a first step to recognizing the persona that they construct in everyday life in order to navigate the complex social and cultural demands that are made of them. Virginia's assignment may be seen as a way that instructors can help their students-teachers take the next step, and ask students-teachers to reflect upon and name the cultural scripts that inform this persona. It also invites students-teachers to take action to transform these scripts when they see them as oppressive to any of their students. Some of the most powerful of these scripts are included in cultural whiteness. Many students-teachers have the sense that they should conform to the demands of cultural whiteness—the dominant, norms, values and beliefs of the society that, when translated into practice, function to reproduce white privilege and socio-economic dominance.

Tom's mask assignment sheds light on "teaching and learning . . . as kinds of ritual performance" in this dominant cultural world. In this respect, Tom's lens embodies some different assumptions than Virginia's. Tom draws on the work of Goffman (1959), whose stance suggests that people have greater agency than is implied in the cultural portfolio activity. Tom would argue that awareness of the "everyday presentation of self" is fundamental to the sort of agency that Goffman alludes to. Virginia, on the other hand, makes the assumption that humans have *potential* for agency but that few of us even approach this state since it implies enormous knowledge of self and society and how the two are infused. Becoming an agent in society is a life-long endeavor, a journey we can never cease to take. It involves recognizing the contradictions and tensions between categories of knowledge and social relations and, in the light of this new perspective, looking at reality anew. Tom's exercise helps students gain a clear view of their persona; Virginia's asks them to place this persona, this social act of presenting self, within the macro structure of the wider society. The result of combining the two assignments is likely to be that students will see more clearly the political, hegemonic nature of the process of presenting self in everyday life. They will have a better chance of coming to know how the social and the cultural constitute subjectivities, and how our "emotional white-out" (Salvio, 1998), or the act of going along with the dominant ideological paradigm, functions at the expense of our own beliefs and principles. This action includes cultural white-out.

Tom and Virginia found that some of their students drew less than consciously on their own *cultural whiteness* in an effort to avoid recognizing the influence of certain dominant cultural scripts on their subjectivities. Others were so caught in their "webs of (cultural) significance" (Geertz, 1973) that they were incapable of seeing this influence. For example, many of their students' individualism made it possible for them to ignore how their privileged positions within society enabled them to escape recognizing and questioning this privilege. Some students

marginalized any competing cultural scripts that emphasized giving up privilege in the service of greater equality and social justice in the wider community.

Having said this, many of the students involved in these two experiences, as well as their instructors, gained a considerable amount of awareness of their own social and cultural privilege. They also embraced more complex, post-formal ways of thinking (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996) that emphasized that knowledge is constructed socially and that all of us have the ability to produce knowledge. As a result, we have the capacity to re-invent the schools in which we work and the society in which we live. We have the capacity to transform ourselves. We hope that these two assignments have contributed in some small measure to this transformation process.

Notes

[1] We use the term "students-teachers," with students in the plural, to denote the equal value we place on their roles as learners and teachers, from whom we as teacher educators learn in our own classrooms.

[2] Gee (2000) refers to these alternative perspectives as Discourses (p.183).

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