

**Developing Novices' Professional Scripts for Teaching: An Investigation of  
Teacher Education Practice**

by

Rebecca Gadd

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Chair  
Professor Pam Grossman, University of Pennsylvania  
Professor Kevin Miller  
Professor Carla O'Connor

Rebecca Gadd

[rgadd@umich.edu](mailto:rgadd@umich.edu)

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-5780-5817](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5780-5817)

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## **DEDICATION**

For my kids, who taught me how to teach.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The process of earning a doctoral degree is an inhumane one. It taxes you intellectually, emotionally, and physically and often offers only the most fleeting and intangible signs that the work you're doing is actually worth it. To survive the experience requires a level of will and faith that are impossible to sustain on your own. I could not have made it through this experience without the love and support of those around me.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is my effort to better understand how teacher educators teach professional, anti-racist teaching practice to novice teachers. I argue that one important way to interrupt systemic racism in schooling is to design teacher education that both teaches novice teachers what anti-racist practice *is* and helps them gain some initial skill with *how to enact it*.

I develop a conceptual tool, *professional scripts for teaching*, to identify, parse, and, in this study, teach the anti-racist teaching practice of *assigning competence* (Cohen, 1973; Cohen, Lotan, Scarloss, & Arellano, 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011) to novices. Professional scripts for teaching help to define what “counts” as acceptable professional practice by describing patterns of practice that reflect anti-racist professional ethics to bound the work of teaching. Professional scripts for teaching foreground the relationships among teachers’ professional ethics, decision-making, and in-the-moment patterns of practice.

This study comprises a first-person inquiry (Ball, 2000) into my teacher education practice for using professional scripts for teaching to teach assigning competence to a group of novice teachers. First-person inquiry is a form of qualitative case study closely related to methodological approaches such as action research, teacher narratives, and reflection in or on teaching, which demand an intentional and disciplined marrying of the enactment of practice with the analysis of practice. I investigated my own work to use professional scripts for teaching to design and teach the practice of assigning

competence in a secondary methods course. I used my teacher education practice as the site of inquiry because the kind of teacher education work that I sought to study is different from what is most commonly practiced in the field.

I designed, delivered, and analyzed a practice-focused teaching methods course for a group of novice secondary English Language Arts teachers in an alternative certification program. I examined transcripts of bi-weekly planning meetings held in collaboration with another teacher educator, course materials generated across the semester, videos and transcripts of class sessions, and written reflections on instruction composed immediately after each class session to answer: *What is involved in the work for a teacher educator to translate anti-racist practice from the research literature into a professional script for teaching that can be taught in practice-based teacher education?*

I identify four endemic requirements of practice-based teacher education work aimed at anti-racist practice: (1) the importance of forming productive pedagogical relationships with novices in order to teach anti-racist practice; (2) the need to connect instruction in the practice to the professional ethics of the practice; (3) the requirement to develop decompositions of focal practices that both capture their complexity and reflect enactment; and (4) managing challenges associated with designing meaningful approximations of focal practices.

The work to move from ideas about teaching anti-racist practice to the teaching of anti-racist practice is not straightforward, even for a teacher educator who has relevant knowledge, experience, and commitments to do such work. Some of the complexity arises from common features of programmatic contexts that perpetuate practices that are rooted in structural racism and can interfere with teacher educators'

efforts to teach anti-racist practice. Some of the complexity stems from the inherent difficulty of making anti-racist practice accessible to novices in practice-based teacher education. I offer what I have learned as a possible resource for other teacher educators involved in this necessary and difficult work.

## Chapter 1

### Confronting Racism Through Practice

Imagine a teacher teaching. To be specific, imagine a middle or high school English teacher teaching. What does the teacher look like? What exactly is the teacher teaching? And what does the teacher's teaching look like? What kinds of things does the teacher do and say? How does the teacher move around the room? Now, add students to the room. How many of them are there? What do they look like? What are they doing? How does the teacher interact with them? What does the teacher say or do that signals what the teacher thinks about the students—as people, as learners? How do the students respond to the teacher, and what does the teacher do in response to their responses?

Now stop imagining for a moment and reflect on the task itself. How difficult was it to conjure up a secondary English teacher teaching? How hard was it to mentally add students to the mix and envision the teacher's interactions with them? Where did all of the information you used to carry out this task come from? Some of it, undoubtedly, was drawn from memory. But memory is imperfect. So, what about the rest of the information? Where did that come from? And how might we account for the fact that if you and I compared our imaginary English teaching scenarios, we would likely find many more similarities than differences? At the very least, your vision of secondary English teaching practice would almost certainly be easily recognizable to me as

secondary English teaching practice and vice versa. How does that work?

\* \* \*

This dissertation is my effort to better understand teaching practice. More precisely, it is my effort to better understand how teacher educators teach teaching practice to novice teachers.

Like all scientific endeavors, it rests on a number of assumptions that I make that shape how I designed, executed, and analyzed the investigation. The first and most important of these is that teaching practice matters because it touches kids<sup>1</sup> in classrooms every single day, which means that good practice has the potential to help kids every day and poor practice has the potential to harm kids every day. The second is that teaching practice can be taught—it is a craft that can be learned and honed; one does not have to be “born” a teacher in order to learn to practice well. The third is that teaching teaching practice is complicated by the historical and social contexts in which the work of classroom teaching is situated. When teacher educators set out to teach practice to novice teachers they must be aware of these historical and social contexts, and the assumptions about the work of teaching that they give rise to, and be prepared to account for them somehow.

With these assumptions as a foundation, I have built a series of arguments that frame my inquiry in this dissertation study. I argue that the reason that the teaching practice you imagined above is likely to look like that which I imagined is that we share

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation I will generally refer to the young humans who attend K-12 schools as “kids” rather than as “students” or “children.” I opt for “kids” over “students” because the latter is a role word that, I feel, obscures the humanity of the kids my work is meant to serve. I opt for “kids” over children because I have always taught and prepared novice teachers to teach adolescents. “Children,” to me, connotes younger kids. My own former middle schoolers would have resented being referred to as “children,” so I opt for “kids” in an effort to respect their way of identifying themselves.

a cultural context which has helped to set our expectations for what teaching practice is and how it should go in enactment (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998). I will refer to these sets of shared expectations that shape enactment as *scripts for teaching*. I also argue that the most commonly held and enacted scripts for teaching in the American cultural context are deeply rooted in the racist structures and intentions of early mass schooling in this country. Further, I argue that the practices that these common scripts for teaching give rise to continue to harm students, especially students of color, today.

Reflecting my assumptions outlined above, I've identified teacher education as one important potential point of intervention against the harm that common scripts for teaching wreak on marginalized students, especially students of color. In particular, I advocate for teacher education that is intentionally aimed at resetting novice teachers' scripts, or expectations, for what teaching practice is and how it is enacted so that they develop *professional scripts for teaching* that are distinct from and disruptive of harmful common scripts that reflect and reinforce the racist status quo. This dissertation is an inquiry into my own teacher education practice to support a group of novice middle and high school English teachers to develop a *professional script for teaching* for a particular anti-racist practice with the goal of helping novices to disrupt racism in their teaching practice. I set out to investigate the teacher education work involved in teaching a particular practice that has been well-described in research literature on teaching equitably in a way that reflects a professional script for teaching. I asked:

What is involved in the work for a teacher educator to translate anti-racist practice from the research literature into a professional script for teaching that can be taught in practice-based teacher education?

I decided on this approach because, in theory, professional preparation could provide the opportunity for novices to learn new knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking about the professional work that they will undertake, allowing them to develop and begin to enact anti-racist practice. However, teacher education has repeatedly been found to be, at best, a weak intervention on novice practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2012a; Lortie, 1975/2002). In order to proceed with my own teacher education work, I had to first think carefully about why the field has struggled in this way. In this chapter, I outline several major challenges for teacher education that aims to intervene on novice teachers' scripts for teaching. First, I argue that racism is so thoroughly baked into the status quo of both the American system of schooling and the wider American culture, that it is often invisible to everyday understandings of the work of teaching. I then consider the role that novice teachers' prior experiences of schooling have in shaping their scripts for teaching. Next, I discuss how common teaching practices are to a certain extent invisible, and I identify particular implications each of these things has for teacher education that aims to disrupt racism and inequity through practice. Finally, I identify and unpack the focal practice that I taught to novices during this study, *assigning competence*.

### **Challenges for Teacher Education**

Practices are social constructs that emerge from social contexts (Wenger, 1998), and it was clear from very early on that the teaching practices that emerged from the social context of early mass schooling did not serve all students equally well. At a meeting of the National Educational Association in 1881, the Maryland Superintendent of Public Instruction, M.A. Newell, observed:



Theoretically, the public school is for all; practically, it is conducted with less regard to the very lowest stratum of society than is desirable. Our schools are now the best schools to be found, but they are surrounded by a set of rigid rules, customs, and traditions which have a tendency to keep out the very children that those schools were established to educate. (p. 79)

A decade later, Rice (1893) described the classrooms of the urban poor as dominated by teaching that was control-oriented and focused on rote instruction. That is, the practices that teachers used seemed less about cultivating independent young minds than they were about disciplining children enough so that their heads could be successfully filled with some acceptable number of facts. The children educated in this way were not envisioned as the future thinkers and leaders of the nation. Rather, they were being prepared to one day occupy the same strata of society that their parents did, socialized to obey the status quo, not to question it. These same critiques continue to be relevant to schools that serve minoritized populations today (e.g., Anyon, 1981b; Emdin, 2016). In order to understand why this is so, it's necessary to understand the social context of early schooling, including the purposes for which mass schooling was established, and how those early conditions continue to shape common ideas about teaching practice down to the present day.

### **The Invisibility of Inequity**

Inequity in teaching practice is rendered invisible in the same way that inequity in the wider culture is so often rendered invisible: It hides in plain sight, permeating the assumptions and values that underlie everyday practices. This circumstance allows common, taken-for-granted teaching practices to appear “neutral” when, in fact, they are quite harmful to minoritized children (Howard, 2003). For example, a typical classroom norm has to do with demonstrating respect for one another by not interrupting when

someone else is speaking. This apparently neutral and incredibly common norm is often enforced via the practice of requiring students to raise their hands when they want to speak. However, the idea that this is how individuals respect one another reflects a dominant White, middle and upper-class discourse style of turn-taking in talk. This practice by default positions other forms of interaction as “disrespectful,” deficient, and deviant (Delpit, 2006; Irvine, 1990; Kirkland, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Other examples of inequity that hides in plain sight relate to the access that different groups of kids are given to opportunities to learn. For instance, Dreeben and Gamoran (1986) found that Black students were offered systematically restricted opportunities to learn compared to non-Black students as a result of differences in curricula and time spent in instruction between predominantly Black and predominantly non-Black school settings. Similarly, Anyon (1981a, 1981b) found that kids in schools serving predominantly lower socioeconomic class families received shallower, more limited instruction than their peers at more affluent schools. And this same finding has been replicated in schools serving high proportions of kids of color and kids who speak English as an additional language (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

In the first example, the interactional norm of regulating kids’ discourse in classrooms is so common as to seem unremarkable. An observer would be much more likely to notice a teacher who *didn’t* enforce this norm than one who did. In the other examples, because access to curricula often happens at the school or district level, it is difficult to identify specific differences in opportunity from the ground. That is, if the schoolwide norm is directive, rote instruction, it’s difficult for actors accustomed to that context to identify that that’s not what everyone at every school experiences without

access to some outside vantage point. In each of these cases, the practices described reflect cultural narratives that position children of color and children living in poverty as deficient with respect to their “mainstream” White peers. However, the ways in which these narratives manifest in each case are such that it takes special effort to notice them and to start to imagine how teaching practice might look different. In both cases, the deficit framings that shape the learning experiences of kids who hold marginalized identities have been shaped by the historical roots of schooling and the ideas, attitudes, and practices that they spawned.

**Historic roots.** In “A Talk to Teachers,” Baldwin (1963/1998) identified a “crucial paradox” in American education: the process by which American society educates our young is fundamentally at odds with the purposes for which we should educate them. In Baldwin’s view, the purpose of education “is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions ... To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions” (p. 678). The kind of educated person that Baldwin describes reflects a Western Enlightenment vision of intellectual autonomy: She is critical, she is curious, she is independent. However, as Baldwin also points out, “no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around” (p. 679). The person who can think for herself has the potential to pose real problems to the established social order. People like her have a tendency to ask impertinent questions of those in power, to make decisions that disturb the status quo, to occasionally even start a little revolution—of thought, of governance, of social practice. Baldwin explains, “What societies really, ideally want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society” (p. 670); the truly educated person, as Baldwin defines her, is often rather more trouble

than many societies want to deal with. This is certainly the case in the United States, he argues further, where a culture that ostensibly values individuality and freedom of thought has developed a process of education that serves to suppress the development of free-thinking individuals, especially among those individuals from groups who have been systematically disempowered and marginalized by the state. According to Baldwin, the American process of education represents “generations of bad faith and cruelty” (p. 678) designed to systematically deny access to the forms of thought and knowledge necessary for members of disempowered and marginalized groups to achieve their own identities and challenge the social order that oppresses them (Anyon, 1981b).

Baldwin’s critique of this crucial paradox reflects well the tensions and contradictions inherent in the history of American education. The Enlightenment model of a critical, curious, independently-minded citizenry as the foundation for a modern, functional democracy has long been hedged against by legal and social limitations on who is actually considered a citizen and whose voice matters in the republic. This contradiction is especially evident in the arguments of the Common Schools movement that led to the creation of the modern American system of mass education. The common school was to be a free, public institution that would educate children from all<sup>2</sup> walks of life, ensuring that everyone, regardless of social station, would have access to basic knowledge and skills (Messerli, 1971). The mythos of the common school was that it could serve as the primary tool for achieving our national creed: out of many, one. Through education, American children would be prepared to one day take their places

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<sup>2</sup> I will discuss the relative inclusivity of “all” below.

as citizens with shared values and shared goals, providing social and political stability for a nation that, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, saw itself as fundamentally diverse (Katz, 1968). Upon becoming the Massachusetts Secretary of Education in 1837, Horace Mann, godfather of the movement, made his case for the common school by envisioning an America where all free men would be guaranteed an education as a basic right (Messerli, 1971).

However, even starting from such an apparently optimistic vision of schooling, it was clear from the beginning that the process of schooling would mean very different things for different groups of people. In Mann's New England, for example, the category of "free men" was much more restrictive than a contemporary, romanticized reading of the phrase implies. Most Blacks, many poor Whites, women of all races, and Native Americans were excluded—to say nothing of the later waves of immigrants that Mann could not have imagined from his historical vantage point. Mann's common school would expressly *not* seek to capitalize on or promote the diversity of the American populace as a path to strength and unity; rather, it would deal with diversity by containing and taming it (Cremin, 1957; Herbst, 1991). Mann and his allies saw the diversity of the citizenry as threats to the republic, a condition which could tear the nation apart if left unchecked (Messerli, 1971). The common school was to be a tool for preserving the American ideal by developing and strengthening a singular, homogeneous version of the American citizen (Cremin, 1957; Herbst, 1991; Katznelson & Weir, 1985; Messerli, 1971).

The matter of whose version of citizenship prevailed has profoundly shaped the evolution of schooling and the evolution of teaching practices down to the present.

Nineteenth-century America was a period of tremendous social and economic upheaval. In addition to the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the backlash that followed, the nation was undergoing a process of rapid industrialization and urbanization, especially in the East where the school reformers were based. For many, the social order seemed to be crumbling as the bucolic, Jeffersonian past slipped away (Katz, 1968; Messerli, 1971). In this context, the common school offered a potential mechanism by which the White, Protestant, male elites might preserve their vision of civil society as well as their place in it (Herbst, 1991; Katz, 1968). The common school could communicate values and ration access to knowledge in ways that would support social stability and the status quo to the benefit of those who already social and political power. Commentator B.G. Lovejoy noted, “The system [of public education], to be beneficial, must enlist the sympathies of the middle class, which it will accomplish only when it becomes identified with their hopes and ambition” (1881, p. 345).

This became the project that the reformers undertook, advocating a public education that would reflect 19<sup>th</sup>-century middle class values as defined by White, Protestant, middle and upper middle class, heteropatriarchal, cis-men (Cremin, 1957; Herbst, 1991). Young people would be taught to be literate in a standardized version of English that was familiar and acceptable to the White middle classes (Herbst, 1991) rather than in their home languages and dialects; they would learn to revere hard work, individual achievement, and private property ownership—all reflective of White Protestant values (Herbst, 1991; Messerli, 1971)—rather than alternative<sup>3</sup> social arrangements such as communal wealth and responsibility; and they would be taught a

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<sup>3</sup> “Alternative” here is meant to only signal the meaning “not White-dominant values.” It is not intended as a coded reference to the relative merit, morality, or perceived normality of any particular value system.

brand of patriotism that would lead them to feel content with their prescribed place in the social order (Herbst, 1991; Loewen, 1992) rather than to agitate for change. Mass schooling would become the method by which some Others (e.g., the White urban poor; certain groups of recent immigrants) could be absorbed into the so-called “mainstream,” while other Others (e.g., Blacks) could be systematically excluded. In both cases, the process of schooling was, as Baldwin would later observe, aimed at the perpetuation of a status quo that hinges on a dynamic of dominance and subjugation with Whiteness setting the agenda (Baldwin, 1963/1998; Herbst, 1991; Katz, 1968).

**The apprenticeship of observation.** The status quo of schooling and teaching practice is maintained in large part due to the way in which teachers learn about practice. Formal teacher education has, historically, been a weak intervention on intending teachers’ ideas about and enactment of practice (Feiman-Nemser, 1983, 2012a; Lortie, 1975/2002; McDiarmid, 1990); instead, beginning teachers learn about practice through what Lortie (1975/2002) called the “apprenticeship of observation.” The apprenticeship of observation stems from the fact that teaching is unique among professions in that everyone who enters the profession has spent thousands of hours watching practitioners at work prior to beginning their formal training or induction. The time that kids spend in classrooms from kindergarten (or earlier) through high school and beyond constitutes an extended, up-close, and typically unmediated period of observation of a professional in practice. Through these experiences, kids form ideas about what teaching is, who teachers are, and how teachers work. Those individuals who later become teachers themselves carry these ideas into professional preparation with them as a core facet of their beginning professional socialization that shapes how

they take up the work of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975/2002). This means that once they get into their own classrooms, teachers tend to practice in ways that are consistent with the teaching they observed and experienced as students.

The apprenticeship of observation is a problematic mechanism for learning about practice for a number of reasons. For one, those children who grow up to become teachers tend to have been relatively successful students themselves (Lortie, 1975/2002). These teachers' experiences of practice and their decisions about what practices work well enough that they should try to replicate them in their own classrooms tend to be skewed towards what worked for *them*, what *they* found successful or engaging or enjoyable. Lortie refers to this as the conservation of practice. Further, as I argued above, the system of schooling was designed to replicate and preserve the values of Whiteness, meaning that the students who are most likely to be successful in school are those who conform most closely to the values that schooling upholds. So, for example, it's unsurprising that the teaching profession is now and has historically been dominated by White women (Boyle, 2004; Provenzo Jr, Renaud, & Provenzo, 2009),<sup>4</sup> as kids grow up with predominantly White women teachers and thus can come to take for granted that teaching is a White women's profession.

Following this line of logic regarding replication and conservation of practice to its end, the practices that teachers replicate from their own experiences as students (i.e.,

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<sup>4</sup> Wait, but didn't I also argue that they system serves patriarchal goals as well? So what's going on with these White women teachers? On the one hand, there are historical factors related to the lower social status of teaching as a profession that contributed to the feminization of the field. See Boyle (2004) and Lortie (1975/2002) for more on this. On the other hand, White women have throughout American history contributed actively to the maintenance of White, patriarchal power structures. See the 53% of White women who voted for the 45<sup>th</sup> US President as a modern example of this (Butler-Sweet, 2017; Golshan, 2017); see Butler-Sweet (2017) for an analysis of White women's commitments to White supremacy even where it conflicts with their interests as women.



those they found successful, engaging, or enjoyable) are more likely to be those practices that serve goals directly related to the maintenance of the White-dominated status quo. The apprenticeship of observation in conjunction with the conservation of practice implies that even as the public school population has become more diverse (Krogstad & Fry, 2014) and has re-segregated (Bell, 1980; McNeal, 2009; United States Government Accountability Office, 2016) so that teachers are more and more likely to teach classrooms full of non-White kids, teaching practices continue to conserve the racist early roots of schooling.

Another reason that the apprenticeship of observation is so problematic for learning teaching practice is that, despite the fact that students watch teachers practice every single day and can even name some of the things that teachers do in practice, teaching practice is in many important ways invisible (Lewis, 2007). Much of the work actually takes place inside of teachers' heads as they make decisions about what to do and when to do it based on factors that students are often not privy to (Lewis, 2007; Lortie, 1975/2002). This can lead novice teachers to replicate surface features of practice in ways that can undermine their work with kids. Moreover, because teachers' work is so familiar to students, it can be that much more difficult to see. Novice teachers who draw primarily from their recollections of the teaching practice they experienced are likely to overlook (or to have never noticed in the first place) important features of teaching practice that are necessary for successful enactment. For instance, a novice might plan to use a particular activity that she enjoyed when she was a student without realizing the kinds of strategic decision-making (e.g., about timing, groupings, materials) that her former teacher engaged in to make the activity successful. Finally, experienced

teachers especially are likely to practice so fluently that their work can seem natural or effortless, lending to the impression that teaching is relatively easy and uncomplicated work (Labaree, 2000; Lortie, 1975/2002).

When confronted with the actual challenges inherent in beginning teaching, novices may be more likely to try to get by (Dewey, 1904/1965) by imitating their former teachers as best they can, thus continuing to conserve practice (Lortie, 1975/2002). Teaching is very complex and taxing work. Teachers must cope with multiple, simultaneous, and often competing demands on their attention from moment-to-moment in the classroom. At the same time, they must be active and responsive problem solvers, prepared to deal with a range of scenarios from students' interpersonal relationships to an unexpected fire drill that interrupts a lesson at a key point to an explanation or activity that falls flat. These things in addition to the everyday bureaucratic demands of teaching and the emotional stress that comes along with the work of a caring profession like teaching mean that teachers' capacities are subject to a great deal of strain. For new teachers, this strain is even greater, as they lack personal experiences to draw on to help cope with the demands of the work. The level of demand matters because, when under stress, individuals tend to rely on their knowledge, skills, beliefs, and experiences that are most easily and automatically accessible, which tend to be those that are the most familiar (Jonides, 1995). For new teachers, their most familiar and practiced resources for teaching are likely to stem from their experiences during the apprenticeship of observation—that is, from their common scripts for teaching. Further, by relying on these resources, novices reinforce their familiarity and accessibility, making it even more likely that they will rely on the same resources the

next time they find themselves in a similar situation, setting up a feedback loop that all but ensures the conservation of existing practices.

These features of the apprenticeship of observation help to explain why American teaching practice has remained remarkably stable across generations of teachers (Cohen, 2011b; Lortie, 1975/2002) even as the demographic make-up of American classrooms has changed dramatically. They also help to frame the nature of the task for teacher education that aims to intervene on racism in practice. Such teacher education must grapple with the fact that inequity is historically “baked in” to the social fabric of schooling that has given rise to common teaching practices; it must grapple with the fact that inequity is so taken-for-granted as to often be invisible in teaching practice, making it that much more difficult to address; it must grapple with the fact that novice teachers arrive to teacher education with well-established, though problematic and incomplete, common scripts for the kinds of teaching practices that “work”; and it must grapple with the fact that the challenges of beginning teaching make it more likely that novices will rely on their common scripts to survive in the classroom.

### **Interrupting Racism Through Preparation for Practice**

Professional teacher preparation could, in theory, provide novices with alternative scripts for teaching that might interrupt the conservation of practice and that might interrupt racism in teaching practice.<sup>5</sup> However, the organization of teacher education itself can make this project more complicated. Formal teacher preparation is generally brief—both in comparison with professional preparation in other fields and, especially, in

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<sup>5</sup> It's vital not to assume that simply changing the practices that teachers use will automatically make schooling less harmful for non-White students. Professional preparation must focus on *both* changing practice and ensuring that new practices disrupt racism in education.

comparison with the amount of time that intending teachers spend in their apprenticeships of observation. Depending on the state or school district that one chooses to teach in and the path one takes to certification, one may begin teaching with as little as six weeks of formal preparation prior to entering the classroom (e.g., the New York City Teaching Fellows program). Those novice teachers who do go through a full-length traditional teacher education program prior to teaching are unlikely to experience consistent opportunities to practice practices that break from the status quo: Within their teacher education programs, they are most likely to have opportunities to practice writing lesson plans (Grossman et al., 2009b) that they may or may not ever have the chance to enact; when they enter their field placements for practice teaching, they are likely to face pressure to teach as their host teachers teach, regardless of how well the host teachers' practice aligns with the teacher education programs' orientations and foci (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). In both cases, their opportunities to practice practices that break from the status quo can be severely limited.

No single approach is likely to solve such a complex and long-standing problem on its own. While others investigate the impacts of programmatic changes to teacher education (Bain & Moje, 2012; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Feiman-Nemser, 2012b), I have opted to examine the actual practices that teachers use with students, consider their implications for equity, and devise ways to teach them to novices with the goal that novices will transfer them into their own practice. For instance, critical educators and researchers (e.g., proponents of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy [CRP]) have identified features of equitable teaching practice that is responsive to students who are typically

marginalized in classrooms (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lynn, 2006). Building on this work, some progress has been made in developing teacher education pedagogies focused on the development of critical practices (Howard, 2003; Milner, 2003). There has also been a great deal of work done on conceptualizing and improving the instruction of practice more generally in initial teacher education (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009b; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013).

My work in this dissertation sits at the intersection of these converging concerns: the historical racism of schooling, the ways in which existing practices are conserved, what is necessary for teacher education to disrupt inequity through the teaching of practice, and emerging ideas about how to more effectively teach practice to novices. I have developed a construct, *professional scripts for teaching*, to describe and parse practice in ways that could be useful for anti-racist teacher education. Professional scripts help to define what “counts” as professional, anti-racist practice by signaling where the ethical boundaries of acceptable variations in patterns of enactment lie. I will unpack the construct of professional scripts and how it might be used to design teacher education for practice in detail in the next chapter. In the remainder of this chapter, I unpack the teaching practice, *assigning competence*, that I identified and taught to a group of novice teachers in an effort to interrupt their common scripts for teaching and prepare them for anti-racist practice.

### **Assigning Competence**

*Assigning competence* is the practice of deliberately drawing public attention to an individual’s contribution to the group’s work, with the goal of disrupting established social hierarchies that limit kids’ learning in the classroom (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Cohen

& Roper, 1972; Featherstone et al., 2011). The evolution of assigning competence as a practice a product of Elizabeth Cohen and colleagues' work on Complex Instruction group work (Cohen & Lotan, 1997; Cohen, Lotan, Scarloss, & Arellano, 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011). However, I conceive of assigning competence somewhat differently in my own teacher education practice. I separate assigning competence from Complex Instruction and treat it as a practice that teachers can employ in any instructional configuration in which kids are engaged with authentic disciplinary problems that support their learning of rich, meaningful disciplinary content. The core of the work in both cases is about how teachers position kids with respect to one another and to the content they are learning.

I selected assigning competence for focus in this course because I identified it as an anti-racist practice. It is historically rooted in efforts to design interventions that would improve outcomes for Black students in desegregating public schools (Cohen, 1973; Cohen & Roper, 1972). It is a purposeful intervention on the established social order of a classroom with the express goal of repositioning kids with marginalized identities as valuable contributors to the intellectual discourse (Cohen, 1973; Featherstone et al., 2011). Although the phrase "marginalized identities" encompasses more than race (e.g., socioeconomic status, immigrant status), the practice was designed and can be used to disrupt racialized social hierarchies that position non-White kids as deficient modern American classrooms.

The practice pushes back on the established social systems of classrooms not just by aiming to reposition kids but also by reframing what "counts" as smart in a given content or topic (Cohen et al., 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011). Rather than assigning

competence for good behavior or even right or wrong answers, teachers assign competence when kids generate original intellectual contributions that advance the class's work on rich, meaningful disciplinary content. In this way, the practice requires teachers to design and engage in instruction that broadens how content is framed, whose knowledge matters, and how smartness can be demonstrated in order to open up opportunities for kids to display competence. Broadening how content is framed also disrupts hegemonic conceptions of what knowledge is worthy of learning and who the sources of worthwhile knowledge can be. In this sense, assigning competence is an anti-racist practice regardless of the racial make-up of the particular classroom in which it's used because it enables the teacher to move beyond traditional school definitions of content, which are steeped in Whiteness in the same way that legacy teaching practices are, and redefine the intellectual space of the classroom.

Another, perhaps easily overlooked, aspect of assigning competence that speaks to its usefulness for anti-racist work is the demands it places on teachers to look at and see kids differently. This is because the teacher's use of assigning competence is specific to the child's contribution. Telling a kid "good job" is insufficient; the teacher must name what the individual offered and how it contributes to the work at hand (Featherstone et al., 2011), which entails intentionally looking for kids to demonstrate competence. This orientation of the practice contrasts sharply with deficit views of kids of color that position them as less academically capable and/or potential behavior problems (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Lynn, 2006; Milner, 2005). Finally, assigning competence is, by definition, public (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Cohen et al., 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011): teachers assign competence to reposition kids with

respect to one another rather than to grant personal approval to individuals or provide them with individual feedback on their performances. In this way, teachers signal to the entire group that kids whose racial identities may be viewed as deficient in social contexts both inside and outside the classroom can and do possess competence.

To enact the practice, teachers must coordinate several different types of knowledge and skill. First, they need to be able to recognize the various intersecting social hierarchies that exist both within and outside of the classroom and that can profoundly affect kids' opportunities to learn. Cohen and colleagues (1973; 1972) developed the practice in response to work they did to understand the effects of school integration efforts on Black children. They found that Black adolescents participated less and were rated by both Black and White kids as less capable on tasks completed in racially heterogeneous pairs, regardless of actual ability. The authors argued that this phenomenon was a result of these students responding to the implicit, socialized expectation that Whites are more capable than Blacks, an expectation rooted in Whites' greater social status (Cohen, 1984; Cohen & Lotan, 1997; Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Cohen et al., 1999). These status expectations then limited Black students' opportunities to learn as White students took the lead and Black students deferred to White students' ideas about how best to complete the tasks they worked on together, thus verifying the initial beliefs.<sup>6</sup> This process of marginalization is insidious and often invisible. Therefore, to intervene on this process and enact the practice of assigning competence, teachers must have some knowledge about the ways in which social hierarchies operate and are

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<sup>6</sup> For a more recent analysis of the impacts of social status on kids' learning, see Langer-Osuna (2015, 2016).



reproduced, and they must be able to see those hierarchies at work in their own classrooms.

To enact the practice, teachers must also have some knowledge about individual kids, which implies the need to develop skills for learning about them. Kids come into classrooms with multiple, intersecting identities that influence their positions in local social hierarchies. If the teacher relies on assumptions about kids based on her perceptions of their group membership (e.g., racial identity), then she undermines the intention of assigning competence. Further, relying on assumptions about racialized group dynamics without more in-depth attention to the individual kids in a given classroom is likely to undermine the intention of the practice. For example, it is not clear how the findings on Black-White heterogeneity (Cohen, 1973; Cohen & Roper, 1972) apply in the modern context. American schools today are increasingly segregated by race (United States Government Accountability Office, 2016). What can the findings about Black kids' performances in Black-White groups 40 years ago tell us about Black kids' performance in Black-Brown groups or homogeneous Black groups today?

Instead of relying solely on broad cultural markers that are apt to obscure as much as they may illuminate about kids, to assign competence teachers must be able to learn about their kids as individuals and as members of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociocultural groups, and they must be able to track on the ways in which kids' statuses shifts over time.<sup>7</sup> This work requires both a critical understanding of the

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, in a secondary English class, a child who is at the bottom of the hierarchy when the class studies Romantic poetry may move to the top when attention shifts to 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernist novels, as a result of that child's constellation of personal identities, interests, and background knowledge in conjunction with the classroom context.

social contexts of kids and schools as well as the development of sophisticated relationship-building skills.

The practice of assigning competence also demands deep and flexible knowledge of the content of instruction so that teachers might expand their own and kids' understandings of what it means to be smart in a subject (Lotan, 2006). Teachers can only do this if they have a strong enough grasp of the content under study to identify a variety of intellectually valid approaches to that content. For example, an English teacher who views the study of literature as an effort to identify singular correct interpretations of individual pieces of writing is unlikely to be able to see the value in a kid who offers contradictory analyses. Conversely, an English teacher who has a more flexible and nuanced understanding of literary analysis as a process of complex and multifaceted meaning-making is likely to see that same kid's efforts as a valuable and exciting contribution to the intellectual work of the classroom. Additionally, teachers must know how to design instruction in ways that open the content up to engagement with authentic, disciplinary inquiry (Cohen et al., 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011). Without such instructional design, kids will have only limited opportunities, at best, to demonstrate competence in the first place. However, designing instruction in this way is challenging for novice teachers, especially in light of the fact that it is likely to run counter to the kinds of instruction they experienced as students and thus counter to their existing scripts for content instruction.

Finally, the practice of assigning competence meets five of six of Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald's (2009a) criteria for identifying a core practice for

beginning teaching<sup>8</sup>: It is itself inherently complex, reflecting the complexity of the overall work of teaching; it supports further learning about practice because it overlaps with other high-leverage teaching practices (e.g., eliciting and interpreting student thinking, building relationships (TeachingWorks, 2016)) and demands that teachers study both their students and their own craft in order to enact; it is applicable across subject areas (Cohen et al., 1997; Featherstone et al., 2011); it is of a small enough grain size that novices can begin to master it during teacher education (Lotan, 2006; Swanson, 1997); and it has been shown to positively impact students' achievement (Cohen, 1984; Cohen & Lotan, 1997; Featherstone et al., 2011). Moreover, the practice directly challenges the inequitable status quo of schooling by requiring teachers to take specific note of that status quo and actively intervene on it (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Featherstone et al., 2011; Jilk, 2016; Lotan, 2006).

### **Dissertation Overview**

Recall the teaching practice you imagined at the outset of this chapter. Chances are that whether you would characterize that practice as good or bad, it reflected a common script for teaching that others who have been educated in this country in the past century or so would recognize. My assumptions about teaching practice—that it is important because of its potential to help or harm kids, that it can be taught, and that teaching it is complicated by the particular social and historical contexts of schooling in this country—combined with my analysis of the challenges facing teacher education, led me to frame the research question around which this dissertation is organized:

What is involved in the work for a teacher educator to translate anti-racist practice from the research literature into a professional script for teaching that can be taught in practice-based teacher education?

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<sup>8</sup> More on this in chapter 2.

Underlying this question is a fourth assumption that drove the design of my study: that this kind of teacher education work necessarily includes attention to the development of novice teachers' *professional scripts* for the practice of assigning competence. In other words, in my efforts to translate an anti-racist practice like assigning competence from the literature into something that is teachable in practice-based teacher education, I relied on the construct of professional scripts to help me determine the kinds of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, experiences, and ethical considerations I would need to address in my work with novice teachers.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to unpacking what exactly it is that I mean by *scripts for teaching* and how they might be used to inform a practice-based approach to teacher education.

Chapter 3 describes my methodological approach to this study, first-person inquiry. I discuss how my multiple identities as person, teacher, and research intersect and informed the design and execution of this study. I also discuss my data sources and analytic approach.

In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed description of how the course unfolded. I address my efforts to design and plan the course, what actually happened in each course session, and some context for when and why enactment diverged from intention. This chapter is meant to provide the reader a clear picture how the course went from my perspective as a teacher educator in order to lay the foundation for further analysis.

Chapter 5 contains my findings about the work I did as a teacher educator to teach the practice of assigning competence to this group of novice teachers. I examine particularly salient programmatic constraints on my work and how they shaped what I

was able to do—or what I *thought* I was able to do—with novices across the semester. I then consider the importance and the complexity of forming productive pedagogical relationships with novices as a basis for teaching a professional script for anti-racist practice. Finally, I discuss the work I did to combine my construct of *professional scripts for teaching* with practice-based frameworks and pedagogies to teach the practice of assigning competence to novices.

In Chapter 6, I reflect on what I have learned about the work of teacher education for anti-racist practice. I consider how the construct of *professional scripts for teaching* informed my work, and I identify some implications for teacher education that aims to disrupt racism in schooling.

## Chapter 2

### Definition and Uses of *Scripts for Teaching* in Teacher Education

Common ideas about what teaching is are rooted in a racist system of schooling that was not designed to serve all kids well. From this system, common practices have developed that reflect and reinforce the racist norms upon which mass schooling was built. These practices are conserved and reproduced through generations of teachers as a result of the apprenticeship of observation combined with the weak influence of formal teacher education. If teacher education is to intervene on the harm that these practices do to kids in classrooms every day (as I argue it must), then teacher educators need to formulate ways of defining and teaching practice to novices that intentionally and explicitly work to disrupt common patterns of practice.

In this chapter I develop and illustrate a conceptual tool, *professional scripts for teaching*, that I have devised to identify, parse, and, in this study, teach the anti-racist teaching practice of assigning competence to novices. *Professional scripts for teaching* help to define what “counts” as acceptable professional practice by describing patterns of practice that reflect the professional ethics that bound work of teaching. I have developed this construct based on literature on script theory from cognitive psychology, as well as my analysis of how script theory or ideas like it show up in the literature on teaching. Here, I will first consider script theory itself and what it implies about what practice is and how individuals learn it. Then, I will examine ways that script theory and

“script-like concepts” have been used in literature on teaching. I will next consider what makes practice professional. I will put my definition of “professional practice” in conversation with ideas from chapter 1 on the reproduction and conservation of common teaching practice to distinguish between entrenched *common scripts for teaching* and *professional scripts for teaching*. I will end the chapter with a discussion of relevant ideas from the literature on practice-based teacher education (PBTE) and how they might inform the teaching of *professional scripts for teaching* to novice teachers.

### **What Is a Script?**

The script construct that I build from here first emerged from work in cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence. The idea of the script, “a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation” (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 41), offered a useful model for how human beings organize information in order to quickly and efficiently make sense of and respond to situations they encounter in the world. Through repeated experience with familiar contexts, people link information in their minds in ways that ease retrieval and use of that information in relevant contexts in the future (Abelson, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Sweller, van Merriënboer, & Paas, 1998; Tomkins, 1978). Over time these links become patterned into scripts that determine individual’s expectations for how a given type of scenario might unfold and signal appropriate actions and reactions an individual might take in response (Schank & Abelson, 1977; Tomkins, 1978).

Scripts make information processing and response more efficient because they elide the need for individuals to consciously consider all of the details and contingencies of a given scenario before responding to it (Abelson, 1981; Schank & Abelson, 1977).

Schank and Abelson (1977) give the example of the restaurant script to illustrate how this works by considering how a human brain might make sense of the following story: An individual enters a restaurant, orders some food, pays the check and leaves. Most people could, with very little pressing, form a mental image of how this scenario played out, filling in details from our own past experiences in restaurants to form a narrative understanding of what might have happened. Schank and Abelson illustrate how by varying only slightly the amount of information provided about the scenario (e.g., the restaurant was a coffee shop vs. a bistro, the food came to the table cold), our understanding of what happened can shift dramatically. All of the information we have accumulated over the course of our lives about what happens in restaurants is organized in such a way that we can easily and efficiently call it up and use it to “fill in the gaps” and respond appropriately to similar scenarios when we encounter them again in the future (Abelson, 1981). Rather than having to identify and attend to every single available detail, scripts form cognitive links between details that have been encountered together frequently so that a relatively small amount of information in the scenario presented can trigger access to a large amount of information culled from prior experiences (Schank & Abelson, 1977).

Scripts are a useful construct for understanding how individuals are able to make sense of and take action in the world. The reason for this is that the human mind has consistently been found to have only a limited capacity for attending to and processing information (Jonides, 1995; Sweller et al., 1998). However, the situations that we encounter in everyday life contain vast amounts of information. A full elaboration of the restaurant scenario outlined above could easily run to pages if we were to attend to all



of the details of a specific encounter. Instead, the information is communicated and processed in condensed form that is easier and more efficient for the mind to process. When an individual enters a restaurant, she does not need to consciously recall everything she has ever learned or experienced about what happens in restaurants, how one comports oneself, etc. Instead, she can rely on her restaurant script to offer a framework for attending to, processing, and acting on relevant information in the environment.

Script theory has been used to investigate areas of human sense making and action as disparate as criminality (Gavin & Hockey, 2010), medical education (Charlin, Boshuizen, Custers, & Feltovich, 2007; Hamm, 2005), professional training (Lyons, 2005), and the development of emotional affect (Tomkins, 1978). For example, Gavin and Hockey (2010) studied the responses of 10 career criminal offenders to morally ambiguous vignettes. Findings indicated that the subjects responded to the scenarios presented according to personal “criminal scripts” that reinforced their decisions to engage in illegal behavior, especially in the absence of alternative scripts. In medical education, the concept of “illness scripts” or “decision scripts” has been used to explain how intending doctors develop diagnostic skills. “Illness scripts” refer to patterned presentations of symptoms that signal particular diagnoses. Doctors learn to recognize these patterns over time as they repeatedly encounter similar patterns (Charlin et al., 2007). Doctors’ professional judgment is thought to develop as they build up scripts for dealing with familiar scenarios (Hamm, 2005); those scripts then signal “what is normal and what acceptable variations are, and how these variations hang together” (Charlin et al., 2007, p. 1179), which enables doctors to quickly and efficiently respond to patients’

concerns. Similarly, Lyons (2005) describes the ways in which script theory might inform professional training in a range of fields by signaling design features of professional training that could support learners' development of scripts for familiar tasks within their professional domains.

While each of these authors points to the ways in which scripts support familiar or routine behavior, Tomkins (1978) considers the ways in which scripts may generalize, facilitating individuals' responses to a range of circumstances that share similarities with, but that are distinct from, the circumstances in which the initial script developed. The author describes the case of a baby, Laura, who comes to associate certain environmental stimuli with the experience of being hospitalized. Over time, Laura's reaction to stimuli similar to those she experienced during her hospitalization provoke the same sorts of affective responses as her hospitalization did even when the present context of the stimuli is different. Tomkins argues that she has generalized her experience of hospitalization into an affective script that facilitates her responses to a wider range of situations.

Taken together, the literature on script theory paints a picture of a construct<sup>9</sup> that is stable enough to account for familiar or routine behavior but flexible enough to allow for some variation and adaptation across circumstances. Scripts offer a way to understand and define the boundaries of what one might reasonably expect to occur in a given situation. This, in turn, constrains the range of potential responses to a given

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<sup>9</sup> It is important here to note that I will write about scripts throughout this dissertation as a *theoretical construct*. I am not making any claims as to the literal existence of scripts inside of individuals' thought processes. Rather, I am building the argument that individuals' *act as if according to scripts* under many circumstances and therefore scripts can provide a powerful method for describing and for thinking about how to influence behavior—in my case, describing teachers' behavior (i.e., teaching practice) and influencing it through the use of the scripts construct in teacher education.

situation from infinity down to some set of relatively predictable reactions. For example, when observing one of the restaurant scenarios that Schank and Abelson (1977) lay out, one would expect to see the diner in a table service establishment pay her bill at the end of the meal; one would not expect to see the diner in that same situation do cartwheels around the dining room at the end of the meal. Both responses are within the realm of possibility, but the latter is outside the bounds of anticipated variation based on existing restaurant scripts.

In the next section, I will review how scripts and other, similar concepts have shown up in research on teaching.

### **Scripts and Script-Like Constructs in Research on Teaching**

The word “script” in teaching evokes strong, often negative responses due to the association with the concept of formulaic or scripted curricula. Scripted curricula have often been viewed as constraining and deprofessionalizing, designed as buffers against teachers’ “interference” in well-planned lessons (Reeves, 2010). As a result, the concept of a “script” in teaching has come to serve as short-hand for standardized (Crawford-Garrett, 2016), non-responsive (Cleary, 2008; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997), shallow (Bottoms, Ciechanowski, Jones, de la Hoz, & Fonseca, 2017), and demotivating for both teachers and kids (Crawford-Garrett, 2016; Gatti & Catalano, 2015; Nystrand et al., 1997). The kind of *literal scripting* that these authors and others have investigated and critiqued is certainly one way in which predictable, patterned interactions might show up in the classroom. But literal scripting is, at best, an extremely limited conception of how scripts and scripting can be understood in relation to teaching practice.

Happily, research on teaching and learning to teach contains many instances in which script theory or script-like constructs<sup>10</sup> have been used to explain a much wider variety of aspects of classroom life and teachers' work. For instance, the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002) discussed in chapter one shares important features with script theory. According to Lortie, teachers' lifetime of experiences in schools and classrooms set their expectations of what teaching *is*. Much like the restaurant scenario that Schank and Abelson (1977) use to illustrate the concept of scripts, these experiences of teaching set students'—and, later on, intending teachers'—expectations of how classroom teaching should look and sound, what kinds of events are likely, how student-teacher and student-student interactions will unfold, what range of variation is acceptable, etc. Individuals in classroom spaces (i.e., teachers and students) tend to conduct themselves in accordance with these tacit expectations. And, when intending teachers enter teacher education, their expectations for their own future work reflect their existing understandings based on the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002). Another way to characterize this is to say that intending teachers enter teacher education with pre-existing scripts for teaching.

**Bureaucratic socialization.** The literature on bureaucratic socialization in learning to teach can also be understood as script-like because of the ways in which the bureaucratic contexts of schools are thought to shape teachers' practice. Through the process of bureaucratic socialization, the bureaucratic organization influences individuals' beliefs about and enactments of their organizational roles so that those

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<sup>10</sup> I use “script-like constructs” to refer to explanatory frameworks and theoretical features that share important features with script theory, though the authors who employ them may not use the term “scripts” or explicitly link them to script theory.

beliefs and enactments correspond to the organization's norms and values (Hoy & Rees, 1977). In this way, the individual's responses to everyday situations within the bureaucratic organization come to reflect relatively stable and identifiable patterns of response. Investigators have detailed the ways in which the culture of schooling and of particular schools in which novice teachers work can override teacher education experiences as novices adapt to fit into their bureaucratic environments (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, 1987; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). In these cases, novices appear to develop patterns of expectations and responses that they share with other teachers who share their bureaucratic context.

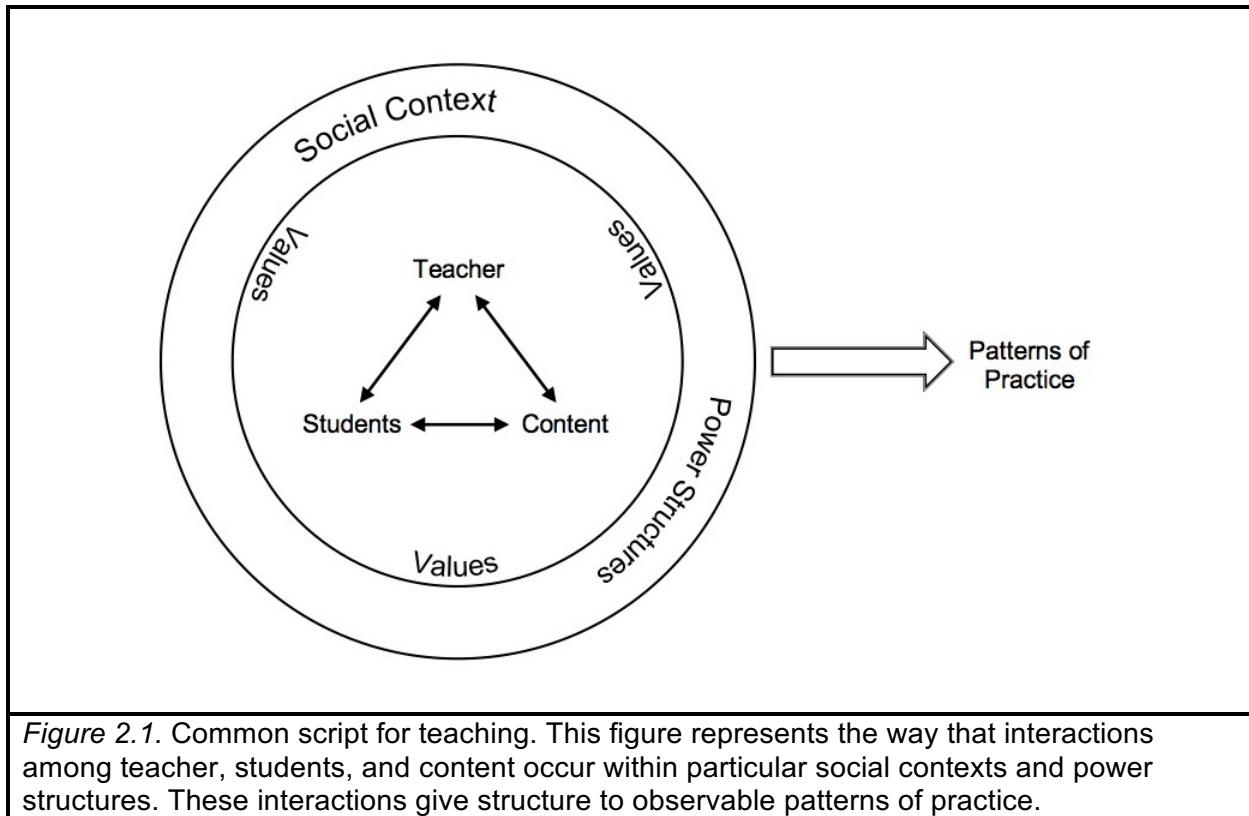
**Teacher decision-making.** Research emphasizing teachers' cognition and decision-making as well as expert-novice differences in teaching has both evoked and invoked features of script theory. Leinhardt and Greeno (1986), for instance, found that expert teachers' behaviors were more consistent across observations than novices' were and that expert teachers had greater facility with a range of routines. They refer to these routines as "small, socially scripted pieces of behavior that are known by both teachers and students" (p. 76), such as the routine for passing out papers. Similarly, Leinhardt (1989) explored teachers' development of curriculum scripts that guide their goal-setting and, as result, decision-making and in-class enactment of lessons. The author identifies key differences between novice and expert teachers' understanding of both lesson purpose (referred to here as a lesson schema) and content knowledge as influencing their enactment of curriculum scripts. Borko and Livingston (1989) use the concepts of scripts, scenes, and propositional knowledge structures to explain differences between expert and novice teachers' practice. According to their analysis,

teachers work from mental scripts that are bound up with their command of regular instructional routines and propositional content knowledge. Shavelson and Baxter (1992) consider the differences in classroom practice between teachers who demonstrate recitation versus orchestration scripts for engaging kids with content. And Schoenfeld (2010) analyzes the links among teachers' scripts, orientations to teaching, and goals and how these influence teacher decision-making in practice.

**Sociocultural research.** Scripts and script-like constructs also show up in research that analyzes the cultural aspects of classroom teaching. Hatano and Inagaki (1986), for instance, describe the development of expertise in teaching as a cultural process whereby the teacher develops a culturally situated mental model of practice against which she compares results and adjust enactment. Although the authors do not mention scripts or script theory, the idea of teachers relying on mental models of practice to facilitate their enactment shares conceptual similarities to Schank and Abelson's (1977) work. Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995) describe the "scripts and counterscripts" that emerge across student-teacher interactions and use them as analytic tools to understand sociocultural processes related to power, intersubjectivity, and the development of shared understanding. They define a script as "a general orientation that serves as a frame of reference" (p. 449) for how to carry out one's social role in a classroom (i.e., as student or as teacher) and how to interact with others. Importantly, in the classrooms they studied, these scripts (and counterscripts) were to a large degree defined by the teacher's handling of content. That is, the teachers and students developed classroom cultures defined by patterned "ways of being" in relation to how the teacher defined what "counted" as knowledge worth learning.

Stigler and Hiebert (1998; 1999) also linked culture, content, and classroom enactment in their international comparison of mathematics teaching. In their view, classroom teachers' practices to define what counts as mathematics content were informed by shared "cultural scripts" about what mathematics *is*. In the United States context, for example, the cultural script defines mathematics as primarily procedural; a script that American teachers in the study enacted in their classrooms through the ways in which they engaged kids with content. Finally, Ladson-Billings (1998) identifies the links between social-historical power structures, content, and teaching practice in her discussion of critical race theory's (CRT) applications to education research. Using a CRT lens, curricula are cultural artifacts that function to uphold a "White supremacist master script" (p. 18) by defining what knowledge and practices count as valuable in schooling. Teachers' practice with respect to the curricula, then, is informed by and reflective of these values and power structures.

**Possible uses for teacher education.** Scripts and script-like constructs give us a way to think about and talk about how teaching practice at the level of individual teachers' classroom enactments connects to and is reflective of broader cultural norms and power structures. In Figure 2.1 below, the elaborated structure on the left side underpins the visible patterns of practice summarized on the right side.



*Figure 2.1. Common script for teaching. This figure represents the way that interactions among teacher, students, and content occur within particular social contexts and power structures. These interactions give structure to observable patterns of practice.*

Scripts for teaching set individuals' expectations for what teaching looks like, what it *is* (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975/2002). These expectations include tacit understandings of social roles and social interactions that are likely to occur inside classrooms; they also include understandings of what content is and how it "should" be framed. These expectations also signal where the boundaries of acceptable variation are in classroom enactment. In other words, they allow us to narrow the range of possible classroom occurrences from infinity down to some relatively predictable set. Scripts for teaching are shaped by the broader cultural context and power structures, and they reflect shared values related to what knowledge and whose knowledge is worthy enough to teach and to learn, as well as how that content should be taught.



Unlike literal scripts, scripts for teaching as they are reflected in the literature reviewed here do not dictate every single move a teacher makes or could make; rather they frame what is possible and appropriate given one's expectations for what the work of teaching *is*. As an analytic tool, they can help researchers, teachers, and teacher educators identify both commonalities across settings as well as acceptable variations, and their likely sources, that are situated within context. For example, if we were to observe two English teachers engaged in the practice of leading a classroom discussion, there are certain patterns of practice we would expect to see based on the fact that they are using the same practice. There are also a range of variations we might expect between the two based on the fact that they have different sets of students, may be working with different specific content, etc.

At the same time, scripts for teaching also enable teacher educators to think about how we define practices and teach them to novice teachers. From the perspective of scripts for teaching, a teaching practice can be defined as a patterned enactment of moves that is constrained by the teacher's expectations about what teaching is, how her own and kids' social roles in the classroom should be enacted, and how she understands and frames content knowledge. These expectations are, in turn, informed by the values of the cultures in which the enactment of the practice is situated. A teacher educator could use a scripts for teaching lens to help define and teach an acceptable range of variation for enacting particular practices; she could also use a scripts for teaching lens to identify, define, and teach practices that reflect particular values.

In the next section, I will propose a distinction between two types of scripts for teaching: common scripts for practice and professional scripts for practice. As I will discuss, this distinction hinges on the values, or sense of ethics, that teachers rely on to determine the range of acceptable variation in their enactment of practice. I will also discuss implications this distinction has for teacher education.

### **Common vs. Professional Scripts**

What I call common scripts for teaching refer to those scripts that produce patterns of practice that reflect the norms and values of the broader culture (see Figure 2.1 above). One facet of this has to do with how what knowledge is considered worth teaching, and to whom, is shaped and constrained by this value system (Baldwin, 1963/1998). For example, common mathematics instruction that focuses on procedural knowledge (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999) and broad sets of discrete, loosely connected ideas (Cohen, 2011a). Similarly constrained definitions of curricular knowledge have been highlighted in science (Bang & Medin, 2010), literacy (Delpit, 2006) and social sciences instruction (Loewen, 1992; Zinn, 2016) as well. The vast majority of kids will receive instruction that reproduces these narrowed views of knowledge. Further, the difference between those kids who have access to broader versus narrower versions of curricular knowledge are likely to break down along racial and class lines, with Whiter and wealthier kids more likely to be exposed to more flexible and expansive forms of knowledge that will give them greater access to power and privilege in the future (Anyon, 1981b; Baldwin, 1963/1998; Delpit, 2006). Thus,

common patterns of practice related to content serve to reflect and reinforce Whiteness.<sup>11</sup>

Constrained views of knowledge inform and operate in tandem with constrained ways of framing and interacting with kids, including how teachers and schools should treat them and what they need in order to learn. Early schools' emphasis on assimilation and control of bodies and minds that deviated from acceptable White norms (Herbst, 1991; Katz, 1968; Katznelson & Weir, 1985) are reflected today in common practices that emphasize control and that frame non-dominant kids in terms of their deficits (Delpit, 2006; Irvine, 1990; Kirkland, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). For instance, Gutierrez, et al.'s (1995) analysis of scripts and counterscripts in classrooms argued that the teacher's work to control discourse through an initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) pattern of interaction rested in part on a tacit positioning of kids as ignorant. Langer-Osuna (2016) described the way in which a teacher's practice of partnering children for academic work highlighted one child's deviation from accepted behavioral norms, which in turn delegitimized the value of that child's academic contributions in both his own and his partner's eyes. This echoes an earlier finding by Cohen (1984) that

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<sup>11</sup> Kids are often acutely aware of these disparities in access, as well. For instance, in an episode of *This American Life* called "Three Miles," Melanie, a young Latinx woman who grew up and went to school in the poorest Congressional district in the United States, reflects on her impressions when, as a high school junior, she visited the campus of an elite, mostly White, private school located just three miles away from her neighborhood:

**Melanie:** Yep. And it was just like, OK, this is private. So this is—everything kind of is a fucking lie that you see your whole life growing up on TV shows or movies. It's like, OK, this is not free. This is not available for kids of color. This is something that only privileged or the elite can have.

I know I looked at it and I said, well, I know that we're only being taught to flip burgers in Burger King or McDonald's or to hold doors for students like them that will probably live in those buildings on Madison Avenue. And we'll be wearing the uniform servicing these people. (Joffe-Walt, 2015)

simply including Black kids in classrooms and working groups with White kids (i.e., as a product of court-ordered school desegregation efforts) did not automatically benefit Black kids, as common cultural and classroom practices positioned them, and led them to position themselves, as less intellectually capable than their White peers. For instance, Black kids in these studies often deferred to their White peers' judgments, even when the Black child was more knowledgeable or capable regarding the task at hand. The kinds of practices that these authors observed (i.e., IRE instruction, partner work, heterogeneous groupings) are common teaching practices that are taken-for-granted as part of the classroom landscape even as the ways in which they are enacted serves to reproduce and reinforce Whiteness via an ethic of control.

It's important to note here that that individual teachers do not have to intentionally set out to uphold Whiteness in order for these forces to operate through their teaching practice. This is not an argument about bad teachers doing bad things. Common scripts are common precisely because they are so taken-for-granted as "just the way things are." Although there were historically very intentional efforts to establish schools that accomplished the goals of Whiteness, the systems that were established a century ago are so entrenched, so much a part of "just the way things are," as to be invisible unless one is specifically looking for them. In the case of common scripts for teaching, they stem from an apprenticeship of observation that begins when we are no more than five or six years old, if not earlier. We develop common scripts for teaching practice because they are what we see of teaching every day long before we ever learn to critically question the power structures that produced those practices.<sup>12</sup> The patterns of practice

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<sup>12</sup> The first time I ever "played school" with my niece, who was then only four or five years old, she told me that I would be the student, she would be the teacher, and I should get out a piece of paper for a spelling

that common scripts underpin can seem quite natural and unassailable<sup>13</sup> because they are so consistent with broader cultural values and assumptions about what knowledge “counts” and how we view and treat those who deviate from the norms of Whiteness.

**Professional scripts.** The distinction I draw between common and professional scripts lies in the set of values and assumptions that constrain the decisions and actions that individuals take. Professional scripts describe patterns of practice that reflect the professional ethics that bound work in a particular profession.

I make this distinction on the basis of what I understand a profession to be. One hallmark of a profession is that members of a profession maintain jurisdictional boundaries that define their control over some specialized body of knowledge and practices (Abbott, 1988; Grossman et al., 2009b). Entry into a profession is controlled through specialized training aimed at instilling the specialized knowledge and practices that are central to the work of that profession. So, doctors need specialized medical knowledge and practices; lawyers need specialized legal knowledge and practices; teachers need specialized pedagogical knowledge and practices. Another key feature of professional work is that it is other-focused: professionals across fields enact practice to fulfill obligations to clients (Abbott, 1988; Cohen, 2011b; Schön, 1983). Again, doctors treat patients; lawyers work for clients; teachers serve students.

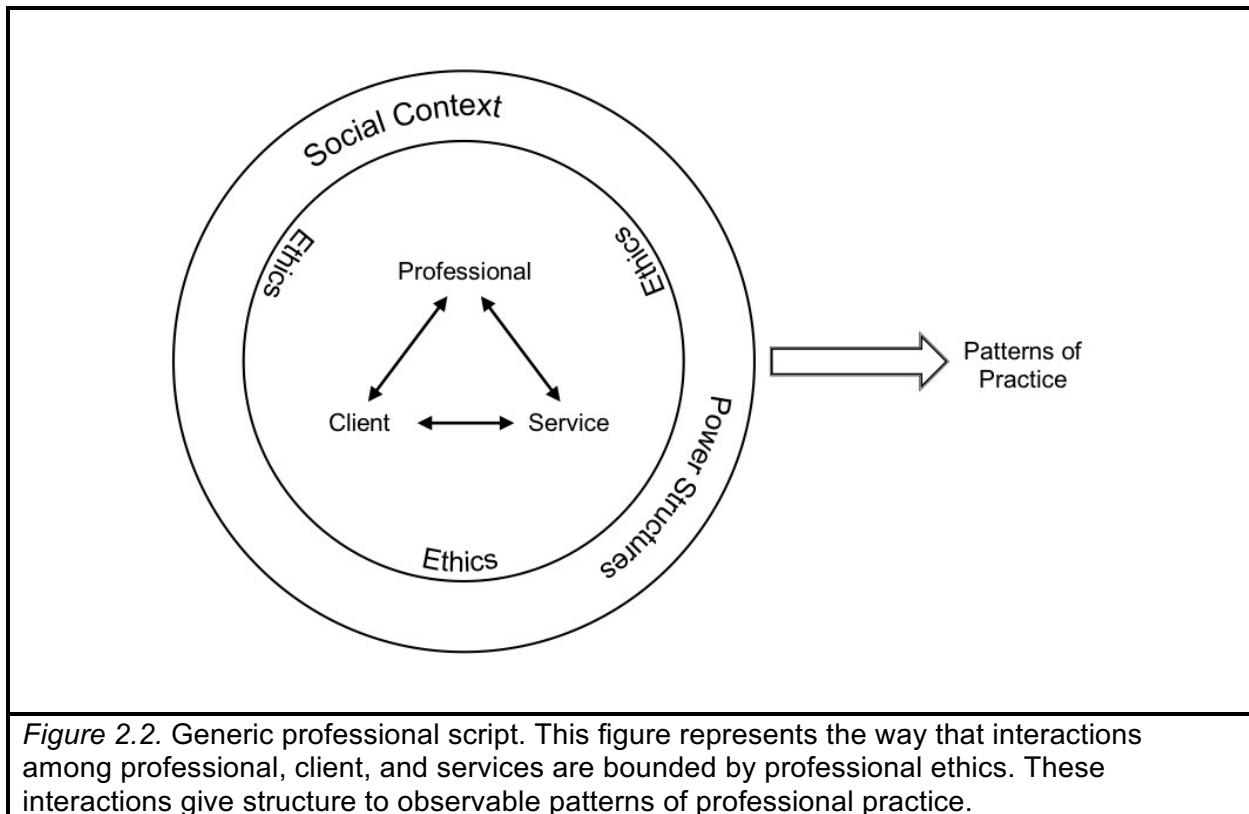
These two criteria are insufficient to defining a profession or a professional practitioner, though. After all, one does not just have to complete medical school or law school and start seeing clients to be considered members of the medical or legal

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test. When I asked her why I had to take a spelling test, she politely but firmly informed me that that is what you do at school and that I needed to raise my hand before speaking again.

<sup>13</sup> Much like the devil, Whiteness’s greatest trick might be in convincing people that it doesn’t exist.

professions. One must also be formally accepted into a profession by, in part, agreeing to abide by the rules and ethics of that profession.<sup>14</sup> Examples of this abound from medicine (American Medical Association, 2018) and law (American Bar Association, 2018), to accounting (Association of International Certified Professional Accountants, 2018; International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants, 2005), architecture (National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, 2015), educational researchers (American Educational Research Association, 2018), and electricians (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 2018). Codes of professional ethics dictate the accepted boundaries of professional behavior or, put another way, the accepted variations in the ways that members of a given profession may use their specialized knowledge and skills in relation to their clients (Figure 2.2).



<sup>14</sup> The Merriam-Webster definition of *professional* in part reads: “c (1) : characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession.”

The range of accepted variations in enactment for a professional is different from the range of variations that a non-professional might enact. For example, a do-it-yourself home renovator might take liberties with wiring her house that a professional electrician would be barred from under the electricians' code of ethics. The professional electrician's enactment of her practice is constrained in different ways than the do-it-yourselfer's.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, although I have argued that professional ethics constitute a distinct set of values that set professional practice apart from the broader cultural context, it is vital to acknowledge that professions still exist within broader cultural contexts and are therefore shaped by them. Broader cultural norms, assumptions, and values influence the kinds of professional ethics that will be developed for a given profession and how those ethics might be interpreted and enacted by professional practitioners. The history of medicine provides an excellent case study of this phenomenon. Although, medicine began to professionalize—including developing defined sets of professional ethics that were tied to licensure and practice—in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, broader cultural norms around gender and race fundamentally shaped the boundaries of professional enactment. For instance, cultural views about the role of women in society and their capabilities shaped the kind of care they received from physicians and barred them from participating in the medical profession in large numbers until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Morantz-Sanchez, 2000). Cultural values around race, in particular anti-Black racism, limited medical care for Black folks to the extent that an entirely separate training and

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<sup>15</sup> It's important to stop here and remember that I'm building a *conceptual definition* of professional scripts here and not describing actual human behavior. Professionals violate professional ethics all the time in actual practice. However, when they do, we describe that behavior as *unprofessional*.

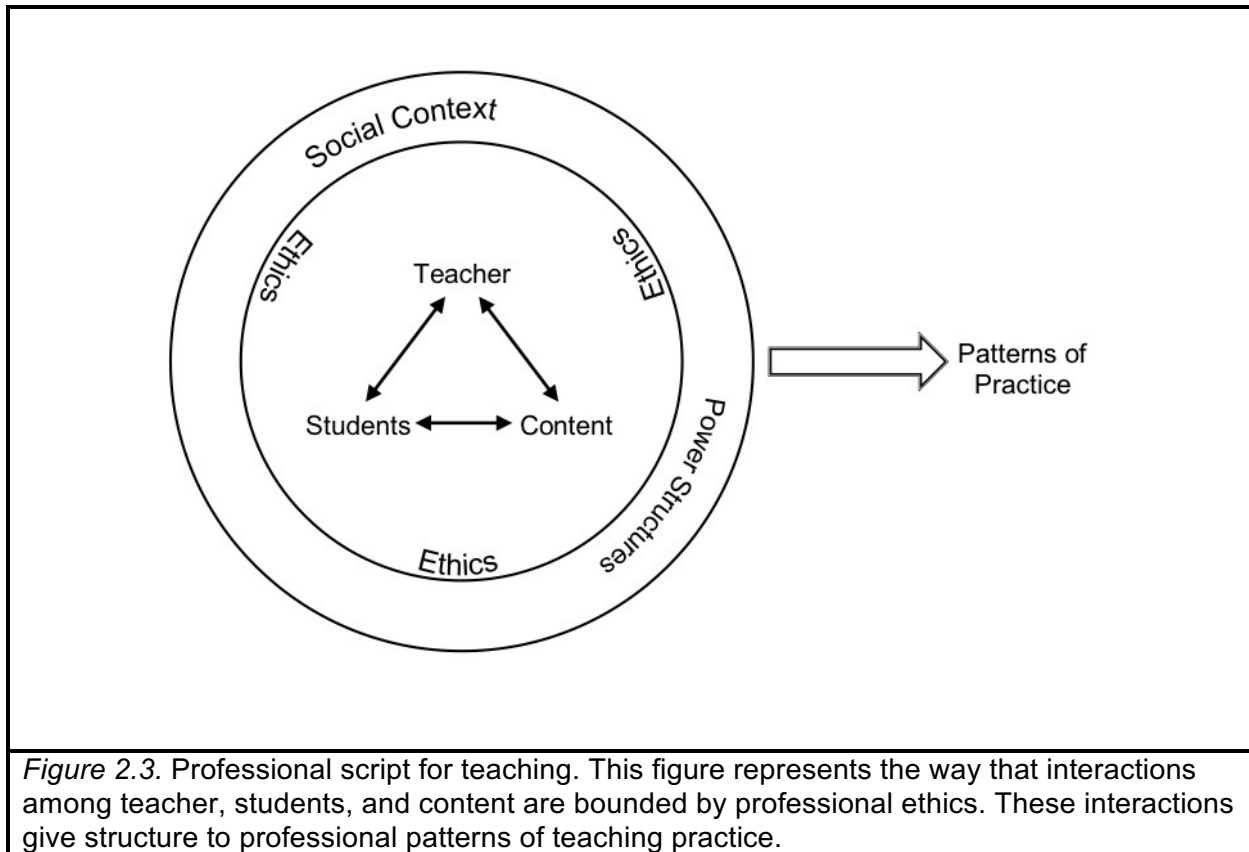
treatment apparatus had to be developed through the establishment of Black medical schools (e.g., Meharry, Howard) and Black hospitals (Savitt, 2007). Those same cultural values also meant that Black folks were considered fair game for medical experimentation (e.g., Tuskegee) that should have been barred by existing professional ethics. The point is that how those professional ethics were interpreted and the patterns of practice those interpretations produced in these cases were deeply influenced by the broader cultural context in which the profession was situated.

I argue that professional scripts as a conceptual construct can be useful for identifying the professional ethics that can or should constrain the range of acceptable variations in how professionals use their specialized knowledge and skills in relation to their clients (i.e., professional patterns of practice). Further, given the important caveat outlined in the last paragraph, when defining professional ethics it's necessary to consider how those ethics might operate in relation to broader cultural attitudes and values. Professional scripts as a descriptive tool allow us to say something about the relationship between professional ethics *as they are* and the patterns of practice *we do see*; professional scripts as a design tool allow us to some extent to decide what professional ethics *should be* and their relationship to the patterns of practice *we would like to see*. In this design sense, the artificiality of professional scripts as conceptual construct lends them power: it's possible to use the construct to define professional ethics purposefully in opposition to those broader cultural values that we find harmful in order to shape patterns of practice that resist and push back on harm.

### **Professional Scripts for Teaching**

Figure 2.3 contains a representation of a *professional script for teaching*.





When using professional scripts as a design tool to define professional ethics, it would be unwise and likely self-defeating to ignore existing ideas about what a profession’s ethical boundaries are or should be. In this section, I consider ideas about where the professional ethical boundaries of teaching lie, as well as arguments about what they could or should entail, as I work to define the professional scripts for teaching that I used as a basis for this dissertation study.

**Existing boundaries.** The issue of professional ethics for teaching is much more nebulous. In other professions, ethics are tied to certification or licensure, which is generally governed by one or two large professional bodies (e.g., the American Bar Association for lawyers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for electricians). Teaching has no such body. Instead, licensure occurs at the state level,

with licensure standards typically tied to degree attainment and performance on pen-and-paper assessments. Further, these standards are decided by state governing bodies rather than by the body of the profession. Thus, in the American teaching profession there are at least fifty different standards for practice, many of which lack any clear ethical guidelines<sup>16</sup> and are more closely tied to the vagaries of state politics than they are to the work of teaching.

This has created an environment in which no clear professional standard for what “counts” as professional practice exists. So, for example, a teacher can tell a Black kid that his classmates will lynch him (Mason, OH)<sup>17</sup>, can refer to rap as “n----- music” during a class activity (Birmingham, AL), can hand out certificates for “most likely to cry for every little thing” and “most likely to become a terrorist” to kids (Houston, TX), or can tell a Muslim kid that the class needs a special ban just for him (New York City) in the course of their practice and not actually be operating outside the bounds of defined, acceptable professional ethics. In fact, teachers who engage in these kinds of behaviors are often cast in public as otherwise-capable educators who made mistakes borne of ignorance or ill-considered humor (Mason; Houston), rather than professional practitioners who violated the acceptable boundaries of professional practice. This is especially frustrating given that the forms of malpractice that these educators engaged

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<sup>16</sup> The restrictions that teachers do face on their interactions with kids take the form of legal prohibitions and school or district conduct policies. These are distinct from professional ethics because professional ethics signal the boundaries of acceptable practice while also informing the enactment of practice within those boundaries. Legal prohibitions and conduct policies only tell teachers what they *can't* do. For example, 31 states have legally prohibited corporal punishment in schools. This prohibition tells teachers that they can't hit children who misbehave, but it does nothing to inform teachers' practice to form relationships with kids or manage their behavior otherwise. The prohibition does nothing to support the enactment of practice within the bounds of the prohibition.

<sup>17</sup> I will include proper citations for the incidents named in this section in the final draft. I have misplaced the document containing the references.

in directly and negatively impact kids' access to opportunities to learn in their classrooms. The point here is not to pillory these individual teachers but to highlight how the lack of a well-defined and widely agreed upon set of professional ethical constraints on teaching practice allow for incidents like these (as well as others that are less overt but just as damaging to kids) to occur in classrooms on a consistent basis.

**Proposed boundaries.** Efforts have been undertaken by some to identify professional boundaries for teaching practice. For instance, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a respected but voluntary organization, organizes their definition of professional teaching practice around five core propositions: (1) that teachers are committed to students and their learning; (2) that teachers know the subjects they teach and know how to teach those subjects to students; (3) that teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; (4) that teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; (5) that teachers are members of learning communities (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002). Taken together, these propositions suggest a potential picture of what might “count” as professional teaching practice. Similarly, some schools of education specifically delineate the ethical obligations that guide and bound professional teaching practice. At the University of Michigan, for example, intending teachers' decision-making and enactment of practice should be guided by obligations such as care and commitment to every student, ensuring equitable access to learning for all students, and taking personal responsibility for obstacles to student learning and working to resolve them (University of Michigan School of Education, 2017).

Educational researchers have also sketched potential boundaries of acceptable professional practice. Professional teaching practice is that which entails “ambitious goals” for instruction, including “the learning of every student in [teachers’] charge” (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 503). It has the potential to improve achievement for all kids (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009a). And it offers allows teachers to “challenge the structures that sort and label children, teachers, and schools” (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013, p. 380). Professional practice that operates within these parameters is likely to look quite different than practice bound by common scripts that emphasize narrow definitions of academic knowledge and teachers’ control of kids’ bodies and minds. It has the potential disrupt existing racist systems of schooling by directly countering the core assumptions on which those systems were built.

With consideration of the specific history of mass public schooling as a site of immense inequity and injustice for children of color, many researchers have also asked what racially just professional practice might look like. Ladson-Billings (2009) identified “cultural excellence” and an ability to shed “dysconscious racism” and directly challenge the status quo of common classroom practices as markers of culturally relevant professional practice. Teachers who engage in this kind of practice position kids as important sources of knowledge whose multiple identities are a valuable resource rather than a problem to be solved. Paris and Alim (2014) suggest that critical professional practice demands modes of teaching that help kids learn to critically engage both within and across cultures in order to dismantle hegemonic systems that perpetuate inequity. And multiple scholars who work in this space have pointed to the necessity for teachers to develop and use practices that reflect care for their students’ identities and the ways

in which both kids' and teachers' identities interact with and shape kids' opportunities to learn (Howard, 2003; Lynn, 2006; Milner, 2003; Paris & Alim, 2014).

**A design tool for this study.** I use professional scripts for teaching as a design tool throughout this dissertation study. That is, I used them to make decisions about what professional ethics I wished to see reflected in my novices' developing patterns of practice, and, based on this, what I needed to do as a teacher educator in order to guide and support their development. My goal in undertaking this study of the work of teacher education was to better understand how teacher educators can prepare novice teachers for anti-racist practice. Thus, I conceptualized professional scripts for teaching as bound by an ethic of providing equitable opportunities to learn ambitious content to all students in ways that will enable them to engage critically and consciously within and across groups as members of a diverse democracy (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009a; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2014). Defining professional scripts for teaching in this way informed the focal practice I selected for instruction (see chapter 1), informed the decisions I made around designing instruction, and informed my actual enactment of instruction with novices.

In the final section of this chapter, I describe the practice-based framework I used in conjunction with professional scripts for teaching to design and enact instruction with novices.

### **Learning In and Through Practice**

If the distinction between common scripts for teaching and professional scripts for teaching lies in the values that bound what "counts" as appropriate enactment, then it seems that professional education in teaching might focus on developing the

professional ethics or beliefs that are characteristic of professional scripts. However, research has shown that teacher education work that focuses primarily on novices' beliefs does little to change practice (Kagan, 1992). Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008) found that for preservice teachers, opportunities to actually try out provisional professional identities that reflected the values of their teacher education program were a key part of professional learning. This is not surprising, as script theory indicates that scripts are developed through repeated experiences of enactment in relevant contexts (Charlin et al., 2007; Hamm, 2005; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Tomkins, 1978). Put another way, as individuals engage in repeated experiences of similar, related contexts, they begin to develop predictable patterns of enactment that we can describe as a script.

For novices entering teacher education, the contexts of enactment are likely to be extremely familiar to them as a result of their years spent in classrooms as students; but the professional ethics that bound professional scripts are likely to be unfamiliar to the extent that those ethics are defined as distinct from, or even in opposition to, the values that underpin common scripts for teaching. This suggests that developing novices' professional scripts for practice should involve opportunities to engage in enactment of practice in ways that give novices the chance to try out the professional ethics that teacher educators want their patterns of practice to reflect. Thus, rather than learning about professional ethics, novices would be able to see how enacting professional ethics reshapes the kinds of decisions and moves they would make in enactment. In order to foster an initial professional script, teacher educators would need to engage novices in repeated experiences of enacting professional ethics through

practice. Here, I will discuss a framework from the literature on PBTE that I used in this study to design opportunities for my novices to gain experience enacting the professional ethics through practice—to attempt to develop their professional scripts for teaching.

### **Practice-Based Framework**

The literature on PBTE flows from the idea that the work of teaching happens in practice and therefore intending teachers need to learn *to do* practice by actually trying out practices during teacher education (Ball & Forzani, 2009). But which practices are most important for novices to learn? Additionally, simply creating opportunities to practice practice seems insufficient. After all, the student teaching model has existed in teacher education for decades, but it has primarily been effective at teaching novices how to teach however their host teacher happens to teach (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, 1987). So, what opportunities to practice practice would be more effective? Inside teacher education classrooms, the microteaching movement (Allen, 1966; Kallenbach & Gall, 1969) sought to directly teach practice to novices through carefully structured and guided activities, but it was critiqued as too technocratic and lacking in opportunities to develop the real judgment needed in classroom teaching (citations) and eventually faded from prominence. How, then, do teacher educators need to go about organizing practice-based instruction so that novices do begin to develop judgment as well as skill? As the contemporary PBTE movement has emerged, researchers and teacher educators have focused a great deal of effort on these three facets of instruction: identifying practices for instruction, creating useful opportunities for novice learning, and devising pedagogical approaches that support novice development

of both skill and judgment. Here, I discuss each of these facets and what they imply for this dissertation study.

**Identifying practices for instruction.** Some scholars have identified specific core or high-leverage practices that beginning teachers must know and be able to do in order to be considered ready for professional practice (Davis & Boerst, 2014; Sleep, Boerst, & Ball, 2007; TeachingWorks, 2016). While such lists are not exhaustive catalogues of all the practices that teachers may ever use in their classrooms, they are meant to be a robust enough starting place that a beginning teacher will be able to practice effectively in her first year and continue to expand and deepen her practice over time. Grossman et al. (2009a) looked across the PBTE literature and identified common features of the various definitions of core practices that had emerged.

According to their analysis, core practices:

- occur with high frequency in teaching;
- novices can enact in classrooms across different curricula or instructional approaches;
- novices can actually begin to master;
- allow novices to learn more about students and about teaching;
- preserve the integrity and complexity of teaching; and
- are research-based and have the potential to improve student achievement. (p. 277)

To this list, I also added a criterion of my own: a core practice must enable teachers to disrupt inequity in classrooms, either as the primary goal of the practice or through enactment. Some practices, like leading a group discussion (TeachingWorks, 2016), can be enacted in ways that disrupt inequity. The focal practice for this study, *assigning competence*,<sup>18</sup> has as its primary goal the disruption of classroom inequity. In

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<sup>18</sup> I discussed the practice of *assigning competence* in detail in chapter 1.



both cases, PBTE for these practices should emphasize the ways in which teachers should use the practices to disrupt inequity in order for this work to be considered core to beginning teaching.

**Useful opportunities to learn.** Grossman et al. (2009b) examined professional education across several fields to identify the kinds of opportunities to learn that support novices' development of professional practice. They identified three categories of opportunities to learn that novices across fields engaged in: representations, decompositions, and approximations of practice. Representations of practice refer to the ways in which professional educators depict practice to novices and what those depictions make visible about the practice to be learned. Representations of practice require teacher educators to make choices about what is most important for novices to "see" about a practice in order to begin to learn it and to select or design depictions of that practice to be learned that foreground those things. Decompositions of practice refer to teacher educators' efforts to break down practices to their individual parts for the purposes of teaching and learning. Decomposition of practice requires teacher educators to consider what the components of a practice to be learned are and how to engage novices with them in ways that enable both mastery of the individual components and learning the "anatomy of the practice" (p. 2069) regarding how the individual components hang together so that novices may eventually recompose the practice in enactment. Approximations of practice refer to opportunities to engage in the practice to be learned in ways that come close to the actual work of enactment. Approximations of practice may be designed to be more or less authentic to real enactment, but they are not the real thing. Instead, they require teacher educators to

consider which features of enactment are most productive for novices to engage with at a given point in instruction and how authentic the conditions of the practice enactment should be to best support novice learning. For example, at the less authentic end of the spectrum, an approximation of practice could comprise trying out some aspect of the practice with a partner in a teacher education classroom; at the more authentic end of the spectrum, a novice might try out part or all of a practice in a classroom with kids where a teacher educator and/or supervising teacher are present to offer support.

As I designed and carried out this study, I used representations, decompositions, and approximations of practice as a guide to determine the kinds of learning opportunities I would engage novices in to try to teach the focal practice. This work required me to consider not only what about the focal practice I wanted novices to learn but what kinds of opportunities they would need in order to learn and what I should foreground as I designed those opportunities. I will discuss more about how this work went and what I learned from it in chapters 4 and 5.

**Pedagogical approaches.** While representations, decompositions, and approximations of practice provide a guide for thinking about the kinds of opportunities to learn that support novices' development of practice, teacher educators also need to consider what novices are actually doing inside of those opportunities in order to learn practice. Practice-based researchers and teacher educators have addressed this by proposing and beginning to develop "pedagogies of enactment" (Grossman & McDonald, 2008) that directly engage novices in the work they are learning to do. Some of this work has focused on engaging novices in rehearsals of content-specific instructional activities (Kazemi, Franke, & Lampert, 2009); some investigators have

developed standardized interaction activities to support novices' learning of school-community partnering practices (Khasnabis, Goldin, & Ronfeldt, 2015) and interpersonal interactions with kids and parents (Dotger, 2015); and some work has been concerned with developing a range of possible pedagogies that teacher educators could use to engage novices in practice in different ways across coursework (TeachingWorks, 2017b). Each of these efforts has produced pedagogies of enactment that focus novices' attention on particular aspects of the practice to be learned while engaging them actively in in-the-moment decision making that forces them to grapple with putting together technical skill and professional judgment under controlled and supportive conditions.

As I considered the range of patterns of practice that a professional script for the focal practice would produce, I had to also consider the kinds of pedagogies I could use to engage novices in practicing those patterns and developing that script. At the same time, pedagogies of enactment tend to be more involved for the teacher educator than sit-and-get, lecture-style instruction. They require time and resources as well as teacher education conditions that support novices' engagement in active practice. Thus, as I designed and carried out this study, I had to attend to the features of the teacher education environment that I could leverage to engage novices in pedagogies of enactment as well as how I might those that could hinder my efforts. I will discuss more about what this work looked like and what I learned from it in chapters 4 and 5.

### **Summary**

The difference between what I call *common* versus *professional scripts for teaching* lies in the values that bound and inform interactions among teachers, students,

and content. Professional scripts for teaching are shaped by a set of professional ethics that constrain the range of variations in patterns of practice that can be considered acceptable. Because the teaching profession currently lacks a cohesive, widely-held set of agreed upon professional ethics with which to bound practice, I have proposed my own guiding ethic that is meant to explicitly interrupt racist practices and systems that harm kids: Professional teaching is that which provides equitable opportunities to learn ambitious content to all students in ways that will enable them to engage critically and consciously within and across groups as members of a diverse democracy. This ethic constrains the range of variations in professional practice to only those variants which serve these goals. In other words, it sets a professional script for teaching.

In the next chapter, I describe my methodological approach to designing and enacting this study using the construct of professional scripts for teaching in conjunction with principles and pedagogies drawn from PBTE. I discuss how my multiple identities—as a person, as a teacher, and as a researcher—overlap and intersect one another and inform my work. I will also describe the data sources and analytic approach I relied on in this study before moving, in subsequent chapters, to an examination of how my work actually unfolded.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design & Methods

Professional scripts for teaching are a useful tool for foregrounding the relationships among teachers' professional ethics, decision-making, and in-the-moment patterns of practice. Practice-based teacher education provides a framework for thinking about how one might go about teaching practice to novices. Each also provides some useful constraints for identifying potential practices to teach novices during teacher education. I have defined professional scripts for teaching as referring specifically to those patterns of practice that reflect the professional ethical commitment to disrupt inequitable and racist norms in schooling; a teacher educator employing professional scripts for teaching as a design tool would, therefore, seek out equity-focused, anti-racist practices that enable teachers to interrupt the status quo. From the perspective of PBTE, teacher educators should emphasize core practices that occur often across curricula and instructional approaches, reflect the complexity of the real work of teaching, positively impact student learning and development, are generative of further learning about the work of teaching, and are teachable and learnable during initial preparation (Grossman et al., 2009a). One practice I have identified that fits both of these sets of criteria is the practice of *assigning competence* (Cohen, 1984; Featherstone et al., 2011).

However, there is a difference between identifying a practice for teacher education and actually teaching it to novice teachers. Teacher educators must determine how to unpack the practice in ways that make it accessible to novices, and they must design opportunities for novices to engage in the practice in meaningful ways. Even for a practice like assigning competence that has been well-described in research literature, making this leap from concept to teacher education practice is neither simple nor straightforward. It is an act of translation in which the teacher educator must engage in intricate and ongoing work to make the practice intelligible to novices. My interest lies in understanding what this translational work entails. Thus, my research question for this dissertation is:

What is involved in the work for a teacher educator to translate anti-racist practice from the research literature into a professional script for teaching that can be taught in practice-based teacher education?

This dissertation is situated in my own practice and is a study of how one teacher educator went about trying to use professional scripts for teaching and principles of PBTE to translate the practice of assigning competence into something that can be taught to novice teachers during initial teacher education. I designed and taught a field methods “mini-course” for novice secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in which the focus was on learning to enact the practice of assigning competence. I investigate the work involved in this endeavor through an analysis of records of my teacher education practice. In this chapter, I describe my methodological approach to this study. I consider the fragility of studying my own practice and discuss how my multiple identities as individual, as teacher educator, and as researcher inform the work I did and what I might learn from it. I describe a pilot study I conducted and overview my

approach to designing the mini-course for this study. I end the chapter by describing the data I collected and its utility to this study.

### **First-Person Inquiry**

This study comprises a first-person inquiry (Ball, 2000) into my teacher education practice for using professional scripts for teaching to teach assigning competence to a group of novice teachers. First-person inquiry is a form of qualitative case study closely related to methodological approaches such as action research, teacher narratives, and reflection in or on teaching, which demand an intentional and disciplined marrying of the enactment of practice with the analysis of practice. It also shares features with design experiments in that it demands ongoing close attention to and iteration of practice in response to the changing conditions of the classroom (Ball, 2000; Brown, 1992). In this way, first-person inquiry mirrors the work of teaching insofar as the researcher-teacher must adjust to the same complexities of the classroom that the teacher-researcher must respond to via adjustments to instruction. As a responsive teacher educator, I closely analyze my own practice and make adjustments on an ongoing basis; to a certain degree, overlaying a first-person inquiry frame on my practice serves to discipline and formalize my responsive instructional stance so that I may systematically investigate and analyze the work.

Furthermore, this methodological approach allows me to study the work of practice-based teacher education from dual perspectives. I gain an “insider” perspective on the thought processes, decision-making, goal-setting, and enactment involved in actually *doing the work* of PBTE (Ball, 2000; Heaton, 1994; Simon, 1995). For example, this approach allows me to analyze and report on what the experience of trying to teach

a professional script for practice entails from the teacher educator's perspective, grounding my conclusions in the work in a way that a theoretically-informed analysis of another's practice would not. This is because first-person inquiry affords the researcher-teacher an insider's understanding of the local meanings, norms, and nuances of the teacher education course in which the study is situated (Ball, 2000; Simon, 1995). My insider status in this space enables me to see relationships and lay bare complexities of practice and context to which I likely would not have access were I to study someone else's teacher education practice (Ball, 2000).

At the same time, the discipline of first-person inquiry demands that the researcher-teacher objectify and step back from her practice in order to study it (Heaton, 1994; Lampert, 1986; Simon, 1995). In part, she accomplishes this via careful design and definition of the phenomenon under study (Ball, 2000). In this study, the phenomenon under study is *the work involved in teaching a professional script for the practice of assigning competence to novices using practice-based ideas and pedagogies*. Note that my teacher education practice is not the object of study; rather, my teacher education practice serves as *the site of the study*. That is, instead of seeking to unpack my personal experience of teaching this mini-course, I seek to use my experience to start to unpack the work a teacher educator must do to teach practice in a way that supports the development of professional scripts. Defining the phenomenon and study site in this way allows me to move from the grounded, local particularities of my own practice to an analysis that can inform theory and practice more generally (Brown, 1992; Heaton, 1994; Lampert, 1986; Simon, 1995). My goal for this study is to address what's involved in *doing the work as a teacher educator as*



opposed to describing a pedagogical approach that others might attempt to recreate. I do not offer myself or my practice as a model of anti-racist PBTE. Rather, I employ first-person inquiry in order to see what's involved in applying the principles and pedagogies of PBTE with novices in an effort to better prepare them for ethical and anti-racist professional practice.

### **The Fragility of Studying My Own Practice**

The nature of the design of my study necessarily includes *me*—*I* am the teacher educator doing the work of interest, and *I* am the researcher investigating that work. *I* am also a person who comes to the work of both teacher education and research on teacher education with a particular set of experiences and perspectives that inform my assumptions about the work I do and the sense I make of it (Buendía, 2003; Milner, 2007). These three identities—person, teacher educator, researcher—act as lenses through which I view my work. However, none of these lenses stands on its own. One way I think of them is to compare them to a phoropter (Figure 3.1), the machine that optometrists use to test vision. The first thing the doctor does during such an exam is to cycle through a number of primary lenses (“Which is better: one or two?”); then she makes several adjustments to the primary lens to calibrate the amount of correction necessary in order for the patient to see most clearly. Similarly, one of my identities may function as the primary lens in a given context (e.g., teacher educator-me during my teacher education class), but the others are still present, influencing my perception of events. Unlike the phoropter, whose purpose is to identify a set of universal lenses that will allow the individual to see clearly across circumstances, the relative importance of any one of the identities I bring to my work shifts according to the circumstances. Thus,

for example, while researcher-me informs the work I do as a teacher educator, that lens becomes much more prominent when I shift to studying that work.



*Figure 3.1.* Phoropter. Optometrists use the phoropter to test several dimensions of vision individually and in conjunction with one another.

My intention here is to be open about the ways in which my various identities inform this study, not just because I am concerned about methodological rigor (as important as that is) but also because the thing that I am trying to study, teaching anti-racist practice, is intimately and inextricably tangled up with questions of identity, positionality, and power. My goal in this section is to begin to unpack what Milner refers to as “the dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen” (2007, p. 388) that attend any study of race, culture, or difference. Here I examine what I consider to be key aspects of the three main identities I bring to my work and consider how those identities intersect with one another to inform how I teach teachers and how I investigate the work of teaching teachers.

**Becca the teacher.** I, like the majority of the teaching force and like most of the novice teachers I have worked with over the years, am a White woman. I am well-

educated, and I am an experienced classroom teacher and teacher educator. I leverage these aspects of my identity in my teacher education courses to establish credibility and begin to build relationships with novices. I am cognizant of the many assumptions that my novices are likely to form about me, and I make a practice of trying to consciously subvert those assumptions as the courses I teach unfold. I find, for example, that I receive much less overt push back when I introduce ideas related to race and class than instructors of color might face. Because White novices generally seem to read me as “one of them,” my talk about race and class may seem safer and more palatable, an intellectual abstraction; whereas if I were a person of color, they might be more likely to dismiss my commitments as part of an idiosyncratic agenda (Milner, 2015) or even to position themselves as victims of a racialized “discourse of violence” (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). I try to use their expectations of White solidarity (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014) or White comfort (Gadd, in progress) with me as an entry point to engage them with the difficult work of seeing, understanding, and working against the systems of oppression that operate within schooling.

In addition, there are other aspects of my identity that complicate my work with novices. First, although I am White and well-educated and benefit from the many privileges that attend those identities, I grew up in a deeply classed context in which I developed a strong sense of not belonging to a privileged group. For most of my childhood, my hometown was a de-industrializing, semi-rural wreck surrounded by more affluent and educated communities who seemed to look down on us. This fostered my nascent awareness of power systems as well as a foundational affinity to underdogs that was an early manifestation of my commitments to equity and justice. I was also the

first person in my family to graduate from college or to earn a professional degree. I grew up seeing education as my way out of a place and a life that I did not want. I take that zeal for the power of education with me into my work with K-12 kids, and it undergirds the work I try to do with novice teachers. However, I have also come to appreciate the ways in which this stance stems from and upholds a highly problematic “myth of meritocracy” that claims, falsely, that if one works hard enough, she can achieve anything. This is simply not the case for the vast majority of people, especially individuals who belong to marginalized and oppressed identity groups. Both of these ideas—that education is important and powerful and that education and hard work are inadequate solutions to the problems I care about—inform my approach to teacher education research and practice.

Finally, my experiences as a teacher fuel my sense of urgency about the importance of preparation for anti-racist teaching practice. I entered teaching through an alternative certification program that had me start teaching after a six-week summer orientation and two teacher education classes. Although I loved my kids and did the best I could for them, it was not fair to them to have someone as ill-prepared as I was for their teacher. In addition, on the last day of my first year of teaching, I witnessed my principal call the police on one of my sixth-graders over a fist fight. We had had other fights at the school that year, but she’d never called the police before. The difference this time was that my student, a Black boy from the housing projects adjacent to the school, had fought with a White classmate who came from a much wealthier neighborhood several blocks away. I remember the terror I felt for this eleven-year-old child, given what could happen to him if the police decided to arrest him. Thankfully, the

other boy's parents declined to press charges. But I was incensed that an adult, a professional educator, could be so careless with a child's life.

My experiences with the veiled injustice of a system that places untrained novices in charge of children's education and with the overt, racialized violence that the system does to children of color and children living in poverty are present in my approach to preparing novices. I often plan and teach against these experiences, meaning I select topics and design approaches to teacher education with the explicit goal of preparing novices who can teach in ways that interrupt inequity and injustice and that value the humanity of all of their kids. I also draw on these experiences when talking with novices about the realities of the system that they will enter as teachers.

**Caveats.** None of this should be taken to mean that my identities are unproblematic. For instance, my shared Whiteness with many of the novices with whom I work and the cultural baggage (Stanfield, 1994) that goes along with it can also hinder the kind of critical work I strive to do with them. Although deeply classed, my upbringing was in most ways "colorblind." As such, I was socialized to treat the topic of race as a taboo and to expect that others, especially other Whites, will be uncomfortable when race is at issue. My first impulse is often to try to lessen the discomfort by changing the subject, using humor, etc. I have found in prior studies of my practice that I fall into this pattern even when I am explicitly trying to avoid it, which can undermine my goals for teaching critical, anti-racist practice (Gadd, in progress).

I am also aware that my affinity for underdogs and my belief in the power of education complicate my work with novices in at least two ways. First, I can be quite impatient with both novices and with myself. Sometimes, in my desire to see intending

teachers “get it,” I become overly critical of my own attempts to teach them, and I can lose track of the fact that they are learners themselves. Both of these things can make it difficult to productively revise my teaching and can interfere with the relational work I must do with novices if they are to trust me enough to learn from me. Second, as touched on above, I recognize that my commitments have the whiff of the myth of meritocracy and the White savior complex about them. This may make some novices skeptical of me, especially novices who are people of color and/or consider themselves critically conscious. As I work with novices, I must remain critical and reflective about my motives, the sense I make of issues of race and equity, and how I communicate about anti-racist practice—through words and through my own teacher education practice—with novices. Otherwise, I risk reproducing the same dynamics, practices, and power structures that I claim to oppose.

**Becca the researcher.** Heaton refers to “the fragility of studying one’s own practice” (1994, p. 58) to capture the challenges and risks inherent in this type of inquiry. In addition to my personal and professional commitments outlined above, I must also honestly acknowledge that opening my practice to public critique is difficult. There are certainly things that I did or said during the mini-course that I wish, as an instructor, I had done or said differently; as a researcher reporting on my instruction, I might be tempted to obscure such instances or, at the very least, try to cast them in a more favorable light. An even more fundamental issue than this, though, is that conducting an inquiry into my own practice requires me to navigate among my plans and intentions for my practice, my memories of my practice, and the records I have collected of my practice. These three points of view do not always line up with one another, and

sometimes the misalignment is striking. There are often compelling reasons why a teacher's perceptions and memory of a class would differ from the video record, and those reasons offer valuable insight into the teacher's work in such moments. In these instances, my approach to analyzing and reporting findings is to defer to the records of practice made closest to the event (i.e., the videos, video transcripts, and post-class journal entries discussed below) to describe how instruction unfolded while using my plans and memories of practice to provide the in-depth insider perspective that first-person inquiry makes possible.

I do not pretend to set aside or suppress my identities as an individual and as a professional educator when I sit down to analyze and write about my practice. My experiences have led me to design the class and the study in the way that I have because I wanted to learn more about a kind of teacher education practice that is still developing. As the teacher educator in the study, my commitments are part of the thing that I am investigating insofar as they informed the pedagogical design and enactment at every stage. As the researcher of teacher education, my commitments shape how I view the work that I did. My goal in analysis, then, is not to step back from my positionalities as individual and teacher educator, but to employ those points of view critically and productively to help me make sense of the work I did and report on it here.

### **Designing My Practice as the Site of Inquiry**

The site for this dissertation study was my practice-based teacher education practice to teach a group of novice teachers the practice of assigning competence in a field methods course for beginning secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. However, the seeds for this study were planted two years prior while I was teaching a

different cohort of intending secondary teachers. In this section, I will briefly describe the pilot study that I conducted as a result of those experiences and what I learned from it that informed the design of the dissertation study. I will then describe the design, data sources, and analytic approach I used for the dissertation study

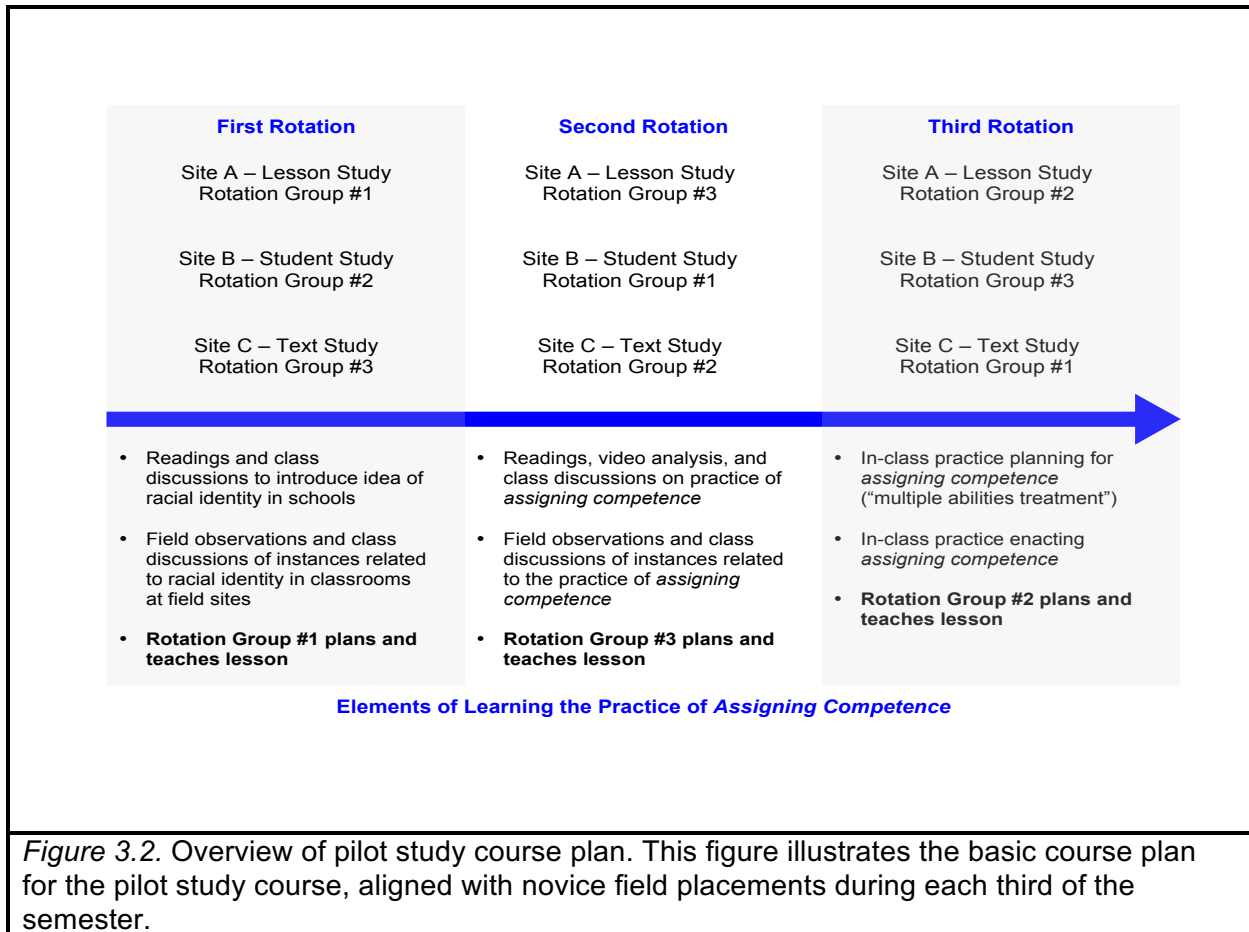
### **Leading with Action**

I was inspired to conduct the pilot study as a result of my experiences as a field instructor for a cohort of intending secondary social science teachers during the winter of 2015. I came out of that semester frustrated by the experience of having spent the semester talking with the novices extensively about teaching for equity and avoiding deficit perspectives only to have their final field assignments reflect attitudes and practices that demonstrated deficit perspectives and upheld inequity (e.g., assuming that kids of color and kids living in poverty shouldn't be expected to learn as much or as well as Whiter, more affluent kids). When I taught the same course again the following year, I decided to "lead with action." Rather than *talking about* equity, I set out to identify a practice or practices I could teach them that would force them to *act like* they believed in kids' strengths. I selected *assigning competence* as the focal practice because enactment demands an explicit focus on equity and teacher intervention and because of the demands it places on teachers with respect to coordinating close attention to kids, content knowledge, and instructional efforts.

I designed the pilot study to try to answer questions related to novice teacher learning of practice across an entire semester: How do novices take up the equity-focused practice of assigning competence? How do they learn about and make sense of kids? What kinds of scripts for the practice do they seem to develop? Figure 3.2



provides an overview of how I structured instruction related to the focal practice across the semester. The novices rotated in teams of three through three distinct field sites over the course of the semester, and they completed one study (a student study, a text study, and a lesson study) at each site. My intention was to focus on how Rotation Group #2 took up the practice.



I used Grossman et al.’s (2009) framework to design practice-based instruction for different phases of the semester. During the first third of the semester (Rotation Group #2 at student study site), instruction emphasized various representations of *assigning competence*. During the middle third of the semester (Rotation Group #2 at text study site), instruction emphasized decomposing the practice into discrete aspects

of the practice that we could work on separately. During the final third of the semester (Rotation Group #2 at lesson study site), instruction emphasized approximations of the practice in our class sessions together and the focal group of novices were required to integrate the practice into the sample lesson they taught at their field site.

**Takeaways.** My initial takeaway from the pilot study was that I needed to revise my research question. I realized as I began to sift through the data that before I could understand what novices learned about the practice, I had to better understand what the work of teaching it was. As I shifted my analysis of the pilot data to trying to make sense of my work with novices, several questions emerged: How does one make a practice accessible to and learnable by novice teachers? What kinds of opportunities to practice the practice do novices need? How can the teacher educator best design them, given programmatic and course constraints (e.g., on time, access to field sites, etc.)? I also realized that I would need to “trouble my teaching” if I were to try to teach practice to novices in a way that would enable them to actually interrupt inequity. In other words, I would need to self-consciously teach in ways that extended beyond my own comfort zone as a teacher educator. I would also need to become more direct in my language: rather than talking generically about “equitable practice,” I decided to explicitly name racism in schooling and anti-racist practice as areas of instructional focus. In these ways, I aimed to disrupt comfortable norms in my own teacher education practice in order to help novices learn to disrupt comfortable norms in their teaching practice. These takeaways directly informed the dissertation study design.

## The Mini-Course

I taught a bi-weekly field methods seminar for six class sessions (12 calendar weeks) in the winter and spring of 2017. The focus of the mini-course was the practice of *assigning competence*. In addition to the identities and orientations described above, I brought with me to this course several years of experience as a teacher educator in content area methods courses, as well as both scholarly and professional experience studying and using principles of PBTE. I had just spent over a year immersed in the literature on assigning competence, including designing, conducting, and analyzing the pilot study and working with colleagues on a cross-course analysis of the teacher education work involved in teaching assigning competence (Gadd, Wilkes, & Ball, in progress). I have also studied and thought deeply about the nature of anti-racist work, especially as a White woman, and, in my analysis of the pilot study, I used this lens to critically analyze my own teacher education practice (Gadd, in progress). As I prepared to teach the mini-course, I had a rich cache of personal, professional, and experiential resources to draw on in my work.

The novice teachers I worked with were first-, second-, and third-year practicing classroom teachers pursuing secondary ELA teaching licenses through an alternative certification program. As I did not intend to study the novices, I did not collect formal demographic data. However, their identities are relevant here insofar as my perceptions and assumptions about them informed my practice. What information I do have about novices' identities is based on observations of them and inferences made as a result of things they shared during formal and informal conversations with me. There were 12 novices in the class, though due to variable attendance, class session sizes ranged

from eight to 11 novices each meeting. Eight were women, and four were men. There were seven White novices and five people of color. There were no men of color in the class, while two of the women of color self-identified as Black or African-American<sup>19</sup> and two, based on their names, scattered biographical details, and self-presentations, seemed to be of Middle Eastern or North African descent. All of the novices taught in resource-deprived public schools in a large urban area. Less than half of them were originally from the area, while the rest had moved to the area in order to teach. To my knowledge this field seminar was the primary source of teacher education support for most of the novices.<sup>20</sup>

I refer to this class as a “mini-course” because it was nested within a yearlong bi-weekly field methods seminar. The full course had begun in September of 2016 and was divided into five thematic units, each comprising three class sessions. I joined the class as an observer during the third unit and launched the mini-course at the start of the fourth unit. Stepping into an established seminar mid-year posed several important challenges. The one that I found most difficult to manage was figuring out how to work within the existing class culture. These novices and their regular field instructor had been together for months—and for those novices in their second or third years, even longer—and had established patterns of interaction that my presence disrupted. For example, during both of my observations, novices spent most of the time multi-tasking—that is, they worked on lesson planning or catching up email on their computers or, in

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<sup>19</sup> During my first class observation, one of the women greeted a classmate by stating, “I was really feeling my Blackness today.” The other woman called herself “a woke Black educator” in an assignment completed during the fourth session.

<sup>20</sup> Three of them reported that they were independently pursuing master’s degrees in education as well.

one case, graded a pile of papers, while also ostensibly engaged in the group discussion. I knew that this dynamic would not be productive for the work I hoped to do around professional, anti-racist practice, but I also recognized that trying to interrupt such a well-established pattern of behavior would provoke resistance and possibly resentment<sup>21</sup> which could also threaten my ability to work with them.

Another set of challenges that I had to manage as I prepared to teach the mini-course was related to the programmatic constraints I had to agree to as a condition of teaching. Most prominent among these was that I was not allowed to give novices any assignments outside of class. I could not assign readings, nor could I write formal field assignments for them to complete during the off-weeks between our meetings. As I was also not following novices into the field (their field observations were conducted by other program staff), this restriction on assignments meant that I had to think creatively about how to bridge our work in the seminar classroom with their developing teaching practice out in the field.

Although as a teacher educator the course context proved to be quite frustrating, as a researcher it provided an opportunity to understand teacher education work in an authentically messy setting. What I mean by that is that much teacher education practice takes place in settings in which teacher educators face many of the same kinds of constraints that I faced here, as opposed to the more ordered settings that are often represented in the research literature. For instance, in my own past experiences as a teacher educator, I rarely taught in programs in which I had full control over my syllabus, including assignments and assessments. Thus, the constraint I faced here regarding

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<sup>21</sup> Spoiler alert: It did.

assignments was a more extreme version of a category of constraints I had commonly had to manage in other settings. Because I was focused on *how* a teacher educator moves from ideas about teaching practice to the teaching of practice (e.g., as opposed to trying to find the best way to teach anti-racist practice), having to navigate the kinds of constraints I faced here was a feature, rather than a bug, in the study. Navigating constraints is an endemic part of the work of teacher education, so it was useful to investigate how I went about my teacher education work here in response to an authentically messy setting.

Figure 3.3 (next page) is an overview of the mini-course schedule and session foci. The complete course overview can be found in Appendix A.

Units 4 and 5 Session Schedule			
Session & Date	Essential Question	Aspect of Assigning Competence	Mini-Course Goal(s)
10 (1) 02/07/17	How do we get to know students as individuals and as members of groups?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies	Define, identify, and analyze <i>assigning competence</i>  Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
11 (2) 02/21/17	How do we engage students with content?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge  Instructional design	Define, identify, and analyze <i>assigning competence</i>  Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
12* 03/07/17	<b>Special Topic: Special Education</b>		
13 (3) 03/21/17	What does it mean to be “smart” in ELA?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
14** (4) 04/04/17	How do we <i>assign competence</i> during instruction?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Instructional design	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
15 (5) 04/18/17	How do we redesign the learning environment to support students’ competence?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge  Instructional design	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice

*Figure 3.3.* Mini-course schedule. Session numbers reflect full course schedule; mini-course session numbers in parentheses.  
 \*Data from this session not included in analysis.  
 \*\*This session took place online to accommodate novices’ schools’ spring break schedules.

**Troubling my teaching.** The kind of teacher education practice that I imagine is necessary to develop anti-racist practitioners is still in the process of being invented. Some researchers have begun to develop pedagogies to teach practice (Dotger, 2015; Khasnabis, Goldin, & Ronfeldt, 2015; Lampert et al., 2013); and some have begun developing anti-racist pedagogies (Howard, 2003; Milner, 2003). I decided to study my own effort to do this work to better understand what is involved in it. For me as a teacher educator, this meant intentionally stepping outside of the range of comfortable, time-tested practices and approaches that I was used to as a student and teacher educator. Grossman et al.'s (2009b) framework and the literature on pedagogies of enactment were useful in helping me design practice-focused instruction. However, I also wanted to ensure that my thinking about racism, equity, and justice and their intersections with classroom teaching practice were explicit drivers of my instructional approach. As such, I incorporated two features into the design of the mini-course that were meant to keep these issues at the surface as I engaged in the work of planning and teaching. I refer to the first as the logical premises of the mini-course and the second as working with a thought partner.

**Logical premises.** I articulated three logical premises for myself and my novices that underpinned all of the work I did as a teacher educator in the mini-course (see Figure 3.4, next page). I borrowed the idea from Elizabeth Ellsworth's (1989) piece, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." In this piece, Ellsworth describes making her anti-racist political agenda explicit to students enrolled in a course she designed by incorporating a list of six assumptions that underlay the logic and design of the course. Her goal was to



subvert the common academic practice of hiding behind the language of criticality to avoid engaging in substantive disruptive practices. She writes, “This class would not debate whether or not racist structures and practices were operating ... rather, it would investigate *how* they operated, with what effects and contradictions—and where they were vulnerable to political opposition” (p. 299). In the same vein, I wanted to avoid becoming bogged down in polite debates about the “true” nature of the American system of schooling and instead make clear to novices that we were working from the assumption that there is a problem out there that we (teachers and teacher educators) have a professional responsibility to address. I included my set of logical premises in the course overview that I shared with novices at the beginning of the mini-course, and they lay at the heart of all of my planning and enactment of teacher education practice throughout the semester.

My practice as a teacher educator is based on a set of logical premises that inform how I understand and talk about teaching, how I plan and enact instruction, and my expectations of you and of myself as professional educators. These premises are:

- (1) **Inequity (e.g., racism) is built into the educational system, and teachers’ have a professional ethical obligation to work against it.**
- (2) **Teachers have agency to act in their classrooms, and every act they engage in in their classrooms is an ethical choice.**
- (3) **Teachers’ personal experiences of schooling are a starting point for learning to teach, but they are not a sufficient basis for responsible, professional practice.**

*Figure 3.4.* Logical premises of the mini-course. Note that this is not the full text—for full text see appendix A.

***Planning and reflecting with a thought partner.*** I spent most of my classroom teaching career as a co-teacher, sharing full responsibility for kids and instruction with an equal partner. Thus, I tend to think of teaching as more of a team activity than is, perhaps, typical in the field, and I know that I am a better teacher because of the

colleagues with whom I have worked. As a teacher educator, I have found working in isolation on courses to be somewhat limiting for my practice. Without regular opportunities to bounce ideas off or receive feedback from an informed and interested other, it's far too easy to fall into comfortable, habitual practices that may or may not benefit novices, and similarly far too difficult to consider my work and my novices from alternative perspectives. This was certainly the case when I taught the course that served as a pilot for this study. Therefore, I recruited a thought partner, Shoshana,<sup>22</sup> who agreed to meet with me throughout the semester to help me plan class sessions and reflect on my practice.

As an experienced educator who shares my commitments to educational equity and justice and to addressing these issues with novice teachers through practice, Shoshana was able to ask questions and offer suggestions for teaching in ways that were aligned with the goals I had for the mini-course but were outside of my typical comfort zone. For instance, when analyzing my work during the pilot study, I realized that by the end of that semester, I was using class discussion almost to the exclusion of all other activity structures. Working with Shoshana helped me to remain conscious of avoiding such comfortable patterns; she also offered concrete suggestions about alternative activity structures that I might use instead, many of which I took up. In addition, she helped me think through the various challenges that arose throughout the semester, such as how to manage unpredictable class attendance from session to session when designing activities.

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<sup>22</sup> All names other than my own are pseudonyms.

## Records of My Practice

I collected the following records of my practice for analysis: recordings and transcripts of bi-weekly meetings with Shoshana; videos and transcripts of my teaching; written reflections on my teaching composed after each class session; all planning documents; a range of supplemental materials that supported my work with novices; and samples of novices' work completed during class sessions. I describe each type of record below, as well as provide a brief explanation of its utility for helping me to study my practice.

**Thought partner meetings.** Shoshana and I met eight times across the semester: in each off-week between mini-course sessions, once before the semester, and once after the final class. Each meeting lasted approximately 40 to 50 minutes. I audio recorded and transcribed all but the first meeting, although I did use notes from that meeting to inform my initial planning of the mini-course. The records of our meetings provide the closest thing to a chronicle of my in-the-moment thinking-in-action as possible, at least with respect to planning and course development. The audio and related transcripts reflect the development of my ideas about the work *as it unfolded*, as evidenced by my frequent use of phrases such as "I'm thinking ...," "I'm wondering ...," "What if I tried ...," etc. In some of these recordings, I can hear myself clarify my ideas for an upcoming class; in others, I can trace how my thinking changes substantially from beginning to end. As data, the recordings and transcripts allow me to step back from and analyze my own intellectual work in a way that more traditional reflections on practice would not.

**Class videos.** I captured approximately six hours of class videos across four of the five class sessions that I taught. I recorded all of the first, second, and third sessions I taught; due to equipment failures, I only captured the first 20 minutes or so of the final session.<sup>23</sup> For each session that I recorded, I set the camera up in a corner of the classroom and set it to capture as much of the physical space as possible in order to be able to track myself as I moved around the room. My goal was to capture my own instructional practice in order to analyze my enactment.

When I conducted my pilot study, I found that having video records helped me to objectify my own practice in a way that facilitated analysis. It helped me to separate my researcher-self from the personal experience of teaching. It was especially useful for helping me to identify distinctions between my intended practice and my enacted practice, which enabled me to think carefully about when and why these differences arose. For instance, in a whole group discussion of an incident that occurred at one of the field sites, I intended to engage novices in a collective inquiry into their responsibilities and possible responses in a situation in which high school kids made racist arguments during a class debate. However, the video record reflected that I made discourse moves to discuss race and racism as abstractions as a way of making myself and novices more comfortable (Gadd, in progress). I sought the same sort of insight into my work by recording my practice again for this study.

**Reflections on teaching.** After each class session I taught, I took 30 minutes to reflect in writing on how things went. I developed the following three questions as guidelines for my responses:

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<sup>23</sup> The fourth session was an asynchronous online-only session, so there was nothing to film. However, I did analyze both the webpage I designed for novices and their responses to this session.

- (1) What did novices learn, and how do I know?
- (2) Did anything surprising, positive or negative, happen during class? Explain.
- (3) Describe my reasoning at one or two key decision points.

I did not respond directly to all three prompts in each reflection; rather, they offered a starting point and direction for my responses. The goal of these written reflections was to capture an immediate and impressionistic account of my teaching that could then be held up against my plans and video records of practice. They were not meant to be full chronicles of the night's events, as I had the videos for that.<sup>24</sup> Instead, they were meant to capture a record of my thoughts immediately after teaching that I could later go back to and analyze.

**Planning documents.** The planning documents I collected are: the overview materials given to me by the program in which the mini-course was situated, including the year-long course syllabus developed by the regular course instructor; my own mini-course overview document that I shared with novices at the beginning of my time with them; weekly lesson plans plus scans of 2-3 sets of plans that I annotated while using during instruction; and handwritten notes and meeting notes with ideas for and commentary on upcoming class sessions.

The planning documents serve as a record of the bridge between my intentions for the mini-course curriculum and my enactment as captured in the class videos. They reflect my efforts to combine abstract, big picture goals for instruction with my attempts to respond to my novices. So, for example, after experiencing a great deal of difficulty getting any kind of discussion going during our first session together, I planned for a

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<sup>24</sup> The sole exception to this was the final class session, when my video equipment failed. As soon as I realized that I wouldn't have the video record, I sat and wrote down as much as I could recall about what had happened that evening.

much more structured approach to scaffold novices' participation during the second session. I selected scaffolds that I thought would enable their contributions and position them as resources for one another and that they could also borrow for their own classrooms. The planning documents and notes for the second session reflect my attempts to do this scaffolding work.

**Supplemental materials.** Supplemental materials comprise all documents I either created or collected in support of my instructional efforts. For example, although I was told by the program not to assign any outside readings, I did provide relevant articles to my novices as suggested readings if they were interested in learning more about the ideas and practices discussed in class. Other examples of documents in this category include the PowerPoint slides I created for each class, the working decomposition of the practice of assigning competence that I shared with novices (see Figure 4.9), two videos used during in-class activities, samples of K-12 student work used for in-class activities, photos of response charts novices generated during different activities, annotated worksheets and handouts, and a case study I wrote for our final class activity.

**Novice work samples.** Finally, I collected photos and scans of all work that novices produced during class sessions (e.g., exit tickets, response charts). I also collected all of the assignments I received in response to the online session (eight of 12 novices responded). I used these materials during the semester to gain insight into what novices might be taking from our work together. As data for this study these documents serve to contextualize my decision-making across the semester.

## **Analytic Approach**

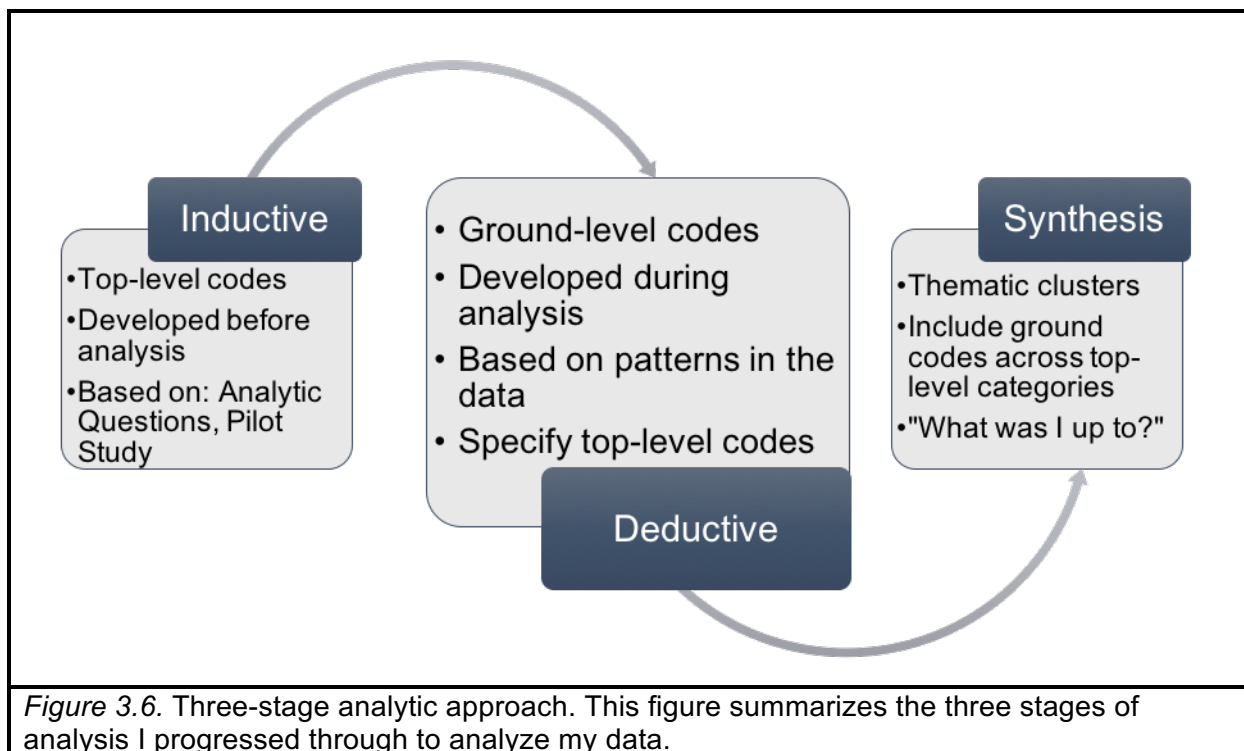
I used a combination of inductive and deductive coding to analyze my data in order to examine the work involved in using professional scripts for teaching to teach anti-racist practice. I generated the analytic questions in Figure 3.5 based on my experiences during the pilot study; the work I'd done to define and conceptualize professional scripts for teaching; and my reading of the literature on critical pedagogy (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2014), practice-based teacher education (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009a), and the practice of assigning competence (e.g., Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Cohen & Roper, 1972; Featherstone et al., 2011).

- (1) What decompositions, representations, and approximations of the focal practice and/or aspects of the focal practice do I offer PSTs? How, when, and why do I attempt to support their development of resources for the practice (i.e., knowledge of students and social hierarchies, content knowledge, and techniques for enactment)? How, when, and why do I revise decompositions, representations, and approximations of the focal practice and/or aspects of the focal practice?
- (2) What pedagogies (e.g., rehearsals) do I employ to engage PSTs with the focal practice and/or aspects of the focal practice? How, when, and why do I employ particular pedagogies? How, when, and why do I attempt to support them in recomposing or coordinating resources for the practice (i.e., knowledge of students and social hierarchies, content knowledge, and techniques for enactment)? How, when, and why do I revise my pedagogical choices?
- (3) How, when, and why do I learn about and engage with PSTs' identities, assumptions, and prior experiences with respect to teaching, schooling, and students? How, when, and why do I use what I learn to inform my instructional decisions? How, when, and why do my own identities, experiences, and commitments inform my instructional decisions?
- (4) How, when, and why do I attempt to support PSTs' development of a professional ethical (i.e., anti-oppressive) stance toward work with students and the work of teaching? How, when, and why do I attempt to support PSTs' development of a sense of agency to intervene on systemic oppression in their future classrooms?
- (5) How, when, and why do I make attempts to help PSTs link our work on assigning competence to other facets of the work of teaching and/or their TE program? What informs my decision making in this area? What image of the work of teaching emerges from my efforts in this area?

*Figure 3.5. Analytic questions.*

These questions reflect what I predicted I would need to know the most about in order to understand the work I did in teaching this course. With them as a starting point, I proceeded through three stages of analysis (Figure 3.6).





My presentation of the analytic stages in the figure above and in the remainder of this section is much tidier than how it worked in reality. My process was cyclical and iterative, but, for ease of reading, I present it as largely linear here. I will use analytic question three (AQ3) to illustrate how I moved through the stages of analysis.

**Induction.** I began my coding work by generating hypotheses about what I thought the main categories of my work to use professional scripts to teach anti-racist practice had been and/or would turn out to be upon inspection of the data. With respect to AQ3, I identified several potential categories of work that, in conjunction with a subset of relevant codes I developed during the pilot study, became my initial codes for analysis (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 <i>Initial Codes</i>	
Top-Level Codes	Pilot Codes
AC ASSIGNING COMPETENCE ACT ACTOR AFF AFFECTIVE RESPONSE COH COHERENCE/INCOHERENCE CON CONSTRAINT DEC DECISION POINT DSN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN INT INTERPRETING PSTS* POS POSITIONING PSTS PST IDENTITY REL RELATIONAL WORK TE IDENTITY TE PEDAGOGY	PIL: Activities PIL: Attention to Student Contributions PIL: Decomp. Techniques/Explicitly Naming Competence PIL: Disciplinary Concepts PIL: Disciplinary Skills PIL: Eliciting Student Thinking PIL: "Facts" PIL: Knowledge/Assumptions About Groups PIL: Knowledge/Assumptions About Individuals PIL: MAT PIL: Motives for Assigning Competence PIL: Praise PIL: "Retrofitting"
<i>Note.</i> This table includes the top-level codes I generated in response to AQ3 (left) and the codes I generated during the pilot study that were relevant to this study (right). I re-organized and re-labeled the top-level categories as I proceeded through stages two and three of analysis. <i>*I later renamed this code MAK MAKING SENSE OF STUDENTS.</i>	

I began coding by examining the transcripts of my meetings with my thought partner, Shoshana. As discussed above, these meetings and my records of them offered a valuable lens through which I could consider the nature of my work across the semester because they were so influential in how I planned and enacted my teacher education practice. I read through each meeting transcript in sequence, applying these codes at the sentence level. As I did this, I also identified instances that were not captured adequately by my initial codes and generated new codes to encompass these instances.

**Deduction.** Even as I worked through the first stage of coding, I began on the second: adding, refining, and parsing apart the inductive, top-level codes I'd started with

to identify more fine-grained patterns in the data. I did this work in part as I coded: I kept notes as I came across features of work in the data that seemed like they could be significant and created new, more specific ground-level codes as patterns of features emerged. For instance, with respect to the top-level code *MAK MAKING SENSE OF STUDENTS*, I noticed more specific patterns in my work in which I appeared to be trying to anticipate novices' responses to instruction. Thus, one way that I parsed the top-level code was to create several grounded codes related to anticipating novices (e.g., MAK: TE anticipating novices\_engagement). Table 3.2 highlights three of the top-level codes I generated based on AQ3 and the grounded codes that I parsed them into during this deductive stage of analysis.

Table 3.2 <i>Sample of Second-Stage Analysis</i>		
Top-Level Code	Ground Code	Definition
MAK MAKING SENSE OF STUDENTS	MAK: TE anticipating	Instances in which I, as teacher educator, am trying to predict something about novice engagement, pushback, or uptake in upcoming class activities/sessions.
	MAK: TE assigning motives	Instances in which I make assumptions and/or draw conclusions that a novice(s) is/are feeling fear/anxiety, frustration, resistance, or skepticism, or is engaged in “studenting.”
POS POSITIONING	POS: TE affirming	Instances in which I affirm or praise novices but do not actually assign them competence in the way that that practice is defined.
	POS: TE repositioning	Instances in which I reframe the way I am positioning a novice or novices based on new evidence or a different perspective on their words/actions.
REL RELATIONAL WORK	REL: TE outreach	Instances in which I engage in relationship building gestures toward novices such as offering resources for their teaching, “playing nice,” trying to learn about them, offering feedback, etc.
	REL: TE trust	Instances in which I invoke common experiences related to the work of teaching and/or pay particular attention to establishing, maintaining, or managing group dynamics to foster trust between me and the novices.
<i>Note.</i> This table reflects a subset of ground-level codes I created in response to AQ3 during the second stage of analysis.		

This second stage of coding took up the majority of my time spent on data analysis as I moved through records of my practice from planning meeting transcripts to class session transcripts to post-session reflections. (NB: I didn’t code the planning documents, supplemental materials, or novice work samples because I found that they were so closely aligned to the other records of practice that they didn’t produce new insights to add to my analysis. I did, however, use these records to contextualize my findings and check my analysis for interpretive accuracy and consistency while coding and to add descriptive depth when presenting my findings in chapters 4 and 5 of this

dissertation.) I completed second stage coding by parsing and refining ground codes as I worked through my records of practice. Once I finished a particular set of records of practice (e.g., thought partner meeting transcripts), I would pause coding and work to revise and organize the codebook. This entailed reading through the examples I'd collected of each code to determine if I was applying codes consistently and then recoding, further sub-dividing ground codes, and developing formal definitions of each code (see Table 3.2 above). I repeated this process until I'd finished coding all three types of records of practice.

**Synthesis.** After coding all of the thought partner meeting transcripts, course session transcripts, and post-class reflections and refining and organizing the codebook a final time, I began the work of synthesizing my interpretation of the ground-level codes. I did this by looking across codes and clustering them by theme. This was different than simply deciding that a given code was an example of Relational versus Positioning work, for example. Instead, I asked myself: What do these moves, taken together, indicate that I was up to as the teacher educator in my efforts to use professional scripts to teach anti-racist practice? In other words, I put each analytic question into direct conversation with the overarching research question in order to make sense of my work.

For AQ3, this meant asking myself what the moves I'd made to learn about, engage with, and use my own and novices' identities and prior experiences reflected about the work I was doing to use professional scripts to teach anti-racist practice. Table 3.3 reflects part of one thematic cluster of ground codes I synthesized in response to AQ3.

Table 3.3

Sample of Third-Stage Analysis

	Top-Level Code	Ground Code	Example from Data	
Building Trust/Rapport	MAK: MAKING SENSE OF STUDENTS	MAK: TE anticipating	<b>Rebecca:</b> “Something to keep in mind is that, although I did give you the assignment with the rubric on the back, you're not being asked right now to assess this assignment.” (Session 2)	
		MAK: TE assigning motives	<b>Rebecca:</b> “And [paying close attention to professional language is] also abstract in this way that I don't think that they trust.” (Shoshana meeting, 03/15/17)	
	POS: POSITIONING	POS: TE affirming	<b>Rebecca:</b> “And then I think I'm gonna send 'em—because I'm interested in what they have to say, and also because I want them to, you know, feel good about it, I'm gonna send them a survey afterwards for anybody who wants to to send me feedback on how the night went.” (Shoshana meeting, 02/23/17)	
		POS: TE repositioning	“At first I was worried that [Felicia’s] demeanor/response might shut Valerie down—Whitney and Talia were already completely out of the discussion and just watching the exchange—but I shouldn’t have underestimated Valerie.” (Reflection, Session 5)	
	REL: RELATIONAL WORK	REL: TE outreach	<b>Rebecca:</b> “Okay. I think that that is an excellent question, and I think that we're gonna put it a little bit on hold for now because it's an immediate problem--maybe you and I can talk after class.” (Session 2)	
		REL: TE trust	<b>Rebecca:</b> “So you guys know each other a lot better than I do, and so that's a risk that I'm taking as an instructor.” (Session 3)	
	<p><i>Note.</i> This table reflects part of one thematic cluster I created in response to AQ3 during the third stage of data analysis.</p>			

This cluster includes 97 ground codes in total from across eight top-level areas of my teacher education work. The subset of the cluster that I present in this table is meant only to demonstrate how I pulled ground codes together for interpretive purposes.

As I went through this process of thematic clustering, the story of my work in the course came into sharper and shaper focus. For instance, I noted several different facets of work that I did to build trust and establish productive pedagogical relationships to support and sustain work on anti-racist practice. I discuss these and other findings in detail in chapter 5.

## Chapter 4

### What Happened

My course was nested within a year-long, bi-weekly field methods seminar for first-, second-, and third-year ELA teachers. Each session was two hours long and took place in the evening after novices were done teaching for the day. The larger course was divided into five, three-session modules that were each organized around some instructional theme. I arranged to take over the course from the regular instructor for the final two modules (i.e., six course sessions). However, due to a special topics session scheduled by the program, I only taught novices for five of those six sessions for the purposes of this study.<sup>25</sup> I refer to these five sessions as the “mini-course” to distinguish it from novices’ year-long course. Figure 4.1 (next page) contains an outline of the activities that took place during each session of the mini-course. In this chapter, I describe what occurred during each of the five sessions. The data included in this chapter provide the basis for the in-depth analysis presented in chapter 5.

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<sup>25</sup> I also taught the special topic session on special education and inclusion. However, because that session included students from all cohorts in this teacher education program and because it covered material that was not a part of my course plan for teaching the practice of assigning competence, I do not include that session in the data analyzed for this dissertation.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session One (in-person)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems of practice: Quickwrite and discussion of what novices thought they knew and learned from work with kids</li> <li>• Reading excerpt from <i>Smarter Together!</i> on assigning competence</li> <li>• Conver-stations activity: serial small group discussions of reading</li> <li>• To-do item: Try one move to get to know a student or students better</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session Two (in-person)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems of practice: Accountable talk of what was tried and learned about students</li> <li>• Introduce decomposition of assigning competence</li> <li>• Learning about students through work on content</li> <li>• Managing the dilemma of knowing</li> <li>• To-do item: Identify 1-2 instances when competence assigned and withheld</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session Three (in-person)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems of practice: Accountable talk of competence being assigned and withheld</li> <li>• Developing a group definition of systemic racism based on trailer for <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i></li> <li>• Applying the group definition to an instance of teaching practice</li> <li>• Applying the group definition to our own practice: carousel about how we define “smartness” in secondary ELA</li> <li>• To-do item: Try one anti-racist move in your classroom</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session Four (online)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 1: Reflect on Session 1 to-do item</li> <li>• Assignment 2: Analysis of Session 1 carousel activity</li> <li>• Assignment 3: Design and critique a multiple abilities treatment for a recent lesson</li> <li>• Assignment 4 (to-do item): Try another anti-racist move in your classroom</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session Five (in-person)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems of practice: Gallery walk and discussion of Session 1 and Session 2 to-do items</li> <li>• Case study activity: A Case of Secondary Writing Instruction</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Figure 4.1. Course session overview. This figure contains an outline of the learning activities we engaged in during each mini-course session.</i></p>		

## Preparing to Teach

I initially designed this mini-course as a standalone sequence of class sessions (i.e., not dependent on the regular course plan) focused on teaching the practice of assigning competence. I took this approach because I had a clear image in my head of what I wished to accomplish with novices. As such, when I wrote the mini-course overview, I defined the following learning goals:

- To define, identify, and analyze the practice of assigning competence in your own and others' teaching practice
- To develop the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to enact assigning competence in your own classroom
- To continue to hone your skills for reflecting on and learning from your own teaching practice

These seemed to offer a reasonable scope of work for our time together across the five sessions, and they aligned with my intention for teaching the class in the first place.

Based on what I learned from conducting my pilot study the preceding year, at this stage of planning I anticipated that my biggest challenge in this work would be managing issues around Whiteness. I predicted that my novices, who I expected to be majority White, would struggle with the issues of power, privilege, and practice that work on anti-racist practice might raise. I was also concerned that my own socialization as a White person could complicate my ability to navigate White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and White comfort (Gadd, in progress). This had occurred during the pilot study. To buffer against this phenomenon, I also developed three logical premises for the mini-course that I shared with novices (Figure 4.2).

My practice as a teacher educator is based on a set of logical premises that inform how I understand and talk about teaching, how I plan and enact instruction, and my expectations of you and of myself as professional educators. These premises are:

- (4) **Inequity (e.g., racism) is built into the educational system, and teachers' have a professional ethical obligation to work against it.**
- (5) **Teachers have agency to act in their classrooms, and every act they engage in in their classrooms is an ethical choice.**
- (6) **Teachers' personal experiences of schooling are a starting point for learning to teach, but they are not a sufficient basis for responsible, professional practice.**

*Figure 4.2.* Logical premises of the mini-course. Note that this is not the full text—for full text see appendix A. (Repeated from chapter 3.)

My intention in including these was to bypass potential debates about whether or not racism is an issue in schooling and about the validity of teachers' personal experiences of teaching as bases for learning to teach. I hoped that by including these premises I could more effectively focus novices' attention on the work of learning the practice.<sup>26</sup>

In the month before I began teaching, I attended two sessions of the regular methods course taught by the regular course instructor in order to introduce myself to the novices and to get a sense of what they had been working on. The regular course instructor also provided me with her yearlong course overview and programmatic planning materials she used in her own planning. I used these planning materials to include signals to novices in my mini-course overview about how our work together would fit with the work they had been doing in the program. However, my observations of the two course sessions left me feeling very apprehensive about how the mini-course might go. The sessions seemed unfocused and unstructured, and I came away from these observations with the strong impression that novices did not see this course as

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<sup>26</sup> See chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion of the reasoning behind including these logical premises.

anything more than a bureaucratic hoop they had to jump through.<sup>27</sup> My concern over this perceived dynamic deeply shaped my planning work and the instructional decisions I made throughout the mini-course.

### **Course Sessions**

Each of the in-person meetings (Sessions 1, 2, 3, and 5) began with a 20-minute problems of practice discussion, in which we used novices' experiences in their own classrooms as a basis for deepening the group's understanding of practice. The first four sessions also included a "to-do item" which comprised small tasks that novices could complete in the course of their regular teaching duties in-between course sessions. During Sessions 1, 2, and 3, I gave novices five to 10 minutes at the end of class to plan and workshop their to-do items. The to-do items then became the focus of the problems of practice discussions we engaged in at the beginning of Sessions 2, 3, and 5. In this section, I describe what occurred during the course sessions.

#### **Session One**

This session included an introduction to the mini-course, the standing course structures, and the practice of assigning competence. My goals for this session were to draw on novices' knowledge and experiences of relational work to begin to think together about how we get to know kids as individuals and as members of groups, as well as to formally introduce the practice of assigning competence. As I planned this session, I also aimed to build meaningful connections between the work I wished to do with novices throughout the mini-course and the work I had been told they'd already done in the course over the months prior to my arrival. A final consideration that

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<sup>27</sup> I did not have permission to collect data on these sessions, so I am only including my general impressions of what occurred.

influenced my planning of this session was that I was told I would lose 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the class for a program meeting that involved novices from all cohorts of this teacher education program. As such, I planned for an hour and 45-minute session rather than a two-hour session.

**Starting off.** I planned to begin this session fifteen minutes late to allow enough time for the program meeting and for novices to transition from the meeting to our class. I thought I would begin by reintroducing myself to novices and spending a few minutes going over the syllabus for the mini-course before moving into the evening's activities. However, upon arriving for class that evening, I was informed that the program meeting I had planned around would take place at the end of class, not the beginning, and would start at roughly 7:30, meaning it would take up the last 30 minutes of class time rather than the 15 I had been told I would lose. Additionally, as the appointed start time for the class came and went, only a handful of novices and the regular course instructor were present. When I asked the regular course instructor about this, she informed me that class sessions typically started ten minutes after the hour; this was not something I had noted during my observations and so had not accounted for it in planning. So, I made further adjustments to the agenda as we waited for the remainder of the novices to arrive.

Although I had intended to use the mini-course overview as a framing device, I decided that it was more important to ensure that we had time for our initial discussion and to introduce the focal practice. As such, I began by briefly reintroducing myself to novices, passing out the mini-course overview, and directing novices' attention to

sections two and three of the overview. Section two contained the mini-course learning goals (Figure 4.3), which I read aloud to novices.

- To define, identify, and analyze the practice of *assigning competence* in your own and others' teaching practice
- To develop the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to enact *assigning competence* in your own classroom
- To continue to hone your skills for reflecting on and learning from your own teaching practice

Figure 4.3. Mini-course learning goals.

Section three contained the logical premises of the course, which I briefly summarized for novices. I felt pressed to move on, so rather than allowing them time to read and discuss either the learning goals or the logical premises I simply asked if they had any questions or comments and, when no one said anything, transitioned into the problems of practice discussion.

**Problems of practice discussion.** I introduced the problems of practice discussion by linking it to the work I was told they had done in earlier course sessions. I explained that a big part of my stance as a teacher educator was that whatever we did in our sessions together had to be tied as closely as possible to their day-to-day classroom practice. In line with this, I had decided to introduce this discussion structure and the focal practice by prompting the novices to consider their relationships with kids. I believed that I would gain a great deal of fodder for our work on the focal practice and simultaneously begin building rapport with the novices because, based on my experiences as a teacher and teacher educator, “teachers love to talk about teaching, they love to talk about their kids” (Shoshana meeting, 02/14/17).

I began the activity by having novices write briefly and informally to the prompt in Figure 4.4.

Think about a time when you tried something (e.g., a new activity) out with a student or group of students, and you were surprised by the outcome—either because it succeeded or because it flopped.

**What did you know/think you knew about the student(s) that made you try what you tried? What did you learn about the student(s) as a result of the activity?**

Figure 4.4. Session 1 quickwrite prompt.

I then introduced suggested discussion norms (Figure 4.5) and solicited a volunteer to begin the discussion by sharing from her or his response to the prompt.

- We will remain offline during discussions.
- We will listen generously.
- We will hold one another accountable for making *evidence-based* claims about kids/teaching/learning.
- We will ask questions and generate hypotheses rather than give advice.

Figure 4.5. Suggested discussion norms.

The first novice to share, Frank, related a recent incident in his class in which he read aloud to his class for the first time. He was surprised to find that they enjoyed it. Several novices asked Frank follow-up questions in the vein of “What book was that?” (Zara, Session 1, 00:15:43) and whether his regular curriculum allows space for decoding and fluency practice (Felicia, Session 1, 00:13:12). I limited my contributions to the discussion to encouraging novices to say more and ask questions; I wanted to see what they would do on their own. Two other novices shared similar incidents to that which Frank had shared and were asked similar questions by their peers. Throughout, this discussion was characterized by drawn out pauses and follow-up questions focused on the technical details of the teaching episodes shared.

**Conver-stations.** After wrapping up the problems of practice discussion, we transitioned into what I had planned to be the main activity of the evening, conver-

stations. According to what I was able to find online (TeachingChannel, 2017), conversations is a semi-structured small group discussion activity in which students read a common text and then rotate through a series of conversations about the text with peers. During the preceding class session, which I had observed but not taught, the regular course instructor attempted to show a video about this activity and discuss it with novices. However, the computer and projector set-up failed, and they were unable to do anything with this activity before the end of class. I included it in my plan for this session as a bridge from her work with them to my own.

Our focal text for this activity was pages 87-92 from *Smarter Together!* (Featherstone et al., 2011) in which the authors describe the practice of assigning competence. Because of the last-minute adjustments to the session timing, I directed novices to read the passage on their own for about 10 minutes while considering the framing questions listed in Figure 4.6.

- (1) How do the authors define *assigning competence*? How would you explain the practice in your own words?
- (2) What are the affordances of using *assigning competence* according to the authors, according to your own analysis? In other words, what does the practice allow or enable a teacher to do?
- (3) What kinds of things does a teacher need to know about her students in order to effectively *assign competence*? How does using the practice help her to learn about her students?

Figure 4.6. Framing questions for *Smarter Together!* excerpt.

Then, I split them into small groups to discuss what they had just read. For the first round of the activity, they discussed the first framing question; after rotating to re-mix the groups, they discussed the second framing question; and after rotating one last time, they discussed the third framing question. I provided them with a guided notes



sheet as both a model of the kinds of materials they could use with their students and as a tool for this activity, but as I circulated amongst the groups I only saw a couple of people writing anything down.

By the time novices rotated through all three groups, I was becoming very anxious that we were going to run out of class time before the program meeting started. So, I did not hold a whole group debrief as I had planned. Instead, I did my best to summarize the main points of the passage along with the major ideas I had heard in the small group discussions I sat in on.

**Workshop.** In planning this session, Shoshana and I discussed the necessity of preserving the end-of-class workshop time that novices would use to prepare their to-do items. We both felt that it was vital to allow novices time to make a plan and get feedback from one another for how they would enact their to-do items so that they could see the tangible connections between our work together in the mini-course and their work in their classrooms. I also felt that giving them time to plan would make it more likely that they would actually carry out the to-do item, which would support the work we would do in the next session. As such, I shut down the conver-stations activity and moved into the workshop time about ten minutes before I expected the program meeting to begin.

Novices' to-do item for this class session is in Figure 4.7.

- Identify **ONE** move you will try in the next two weeks in order to learn more about a student(s) you teach.
- Describe your plan to your group:
  - WHO is your target student(s)?
  - WHAT do you want to know?
  - WHAT will you do to learn about the student(s)?
  - WHEN will you try out your move?
  - HOW do you imagine this will inform your teaching?
- Group members offer suggestions to hone each other's plans

*Figure 4.7. Session 1 to-do item.*

They were to make one move to get to know more about a kid or kids and be prepared to talk about it at the beginning of our next class session. We brainstormed a couple of examples of such moves as a group (e.g., having an informal conversation with a kid in the hallway, going to chess club to interact with a child in a different environment). I then prompted novices to work together with their small groups from the last conversations rotation to create plans using the guidelines on the slide. I gave everyone a post-it note on which to record their plan and directed them to keep the post-it where they knew they would see it during the two weeks before our next class meeting.

## **Session Two**

My main goal for Session 2 was to situate the work we had begun in Session 1 around getting to know kids in teachers' work with content. To accomplish this, I designed most of the session to focus on looking at student work. At the same time, upon reflecting first in writing and then with my planning partner about Session 1, I had become concerned by this group of novices' apparent difficulty talking about teaching beyond surface level technical features:

**Rebecca:** The follow-up questions that were coming from them were very mechanical—mechanically oriented. So: "What's your curriculum?" "What

kind of stuff do you typically do?" That sort of thing. Not really getting at like

**Shoshana:** Mmm hmm. Inside of teaching?

**Rebecca:** Yeah. And not really focused on kids either. (Shoshana meeting, 02/14/17)

The level of difficulty they seemed to experience surprised me because I had assumed that as they had been teaching and taking this course for the five months prior to my arrival they would have developed some facility with this kind of talk. To be clear, I had expected to have to do a fair amount of work with them around what I mean by “professional practice” and how we talk about and learn in and from practice. However, I was unprepared for the extent to which they seemed to struggle to find things to say about their work with kids. Thus, in addition to making progress with the practice of assigning competence, I also designed this session to try to support novices with developing skills for thinking about, talking about, and learning from practice more generally.

**Problems of practice.** We began with our problems of practice discussion, which focused on the to-do items novices completed between Sessions 1 and 2. One working hypothesis that Shoshana and I generated based on Session 1 was that the novices needed a great deal more structure in order to have a productive discussion. In response, I included a formal discussion protocol that included timed turns of talk with explicit directions about the kinds of thing the speaker might say during each turn (Figure 4.8).

- **Round 1:** One person shares out his/her response to the discussion prompt. **(1 min.)**
- **Round 2:** Members of the group ask clarifying questions (i.e., only questions that elicit details of what happened). The initial speaker only offers responses that help to clarify what happened—no analysis yet. **(3 min.)**
- **Round 3:** Members of the group ask analytic questions. These are questions that are meant to help the group get beneath the surface of what happened. **(5 min.)**
  - Some useful analytic questions/prompts include:
    - Say more about ...
    - What made you think ...?
    - What's your evidence for ...?
    - Another way you could think about ... is ...
    - How does this instance connect to [the big idea of the discussion]?
    - How might that help you understand ... more/better/differently?
- **Round 4:** Invite another member of the group to link his/her own response to the discussion prompt to something that has come up during Rounds 1-4.

*Figure 4.8.* One version of accountable talk. This figure reflects the discussion protocol we used during our problems of practice discussion in Sessions 2 and 3.

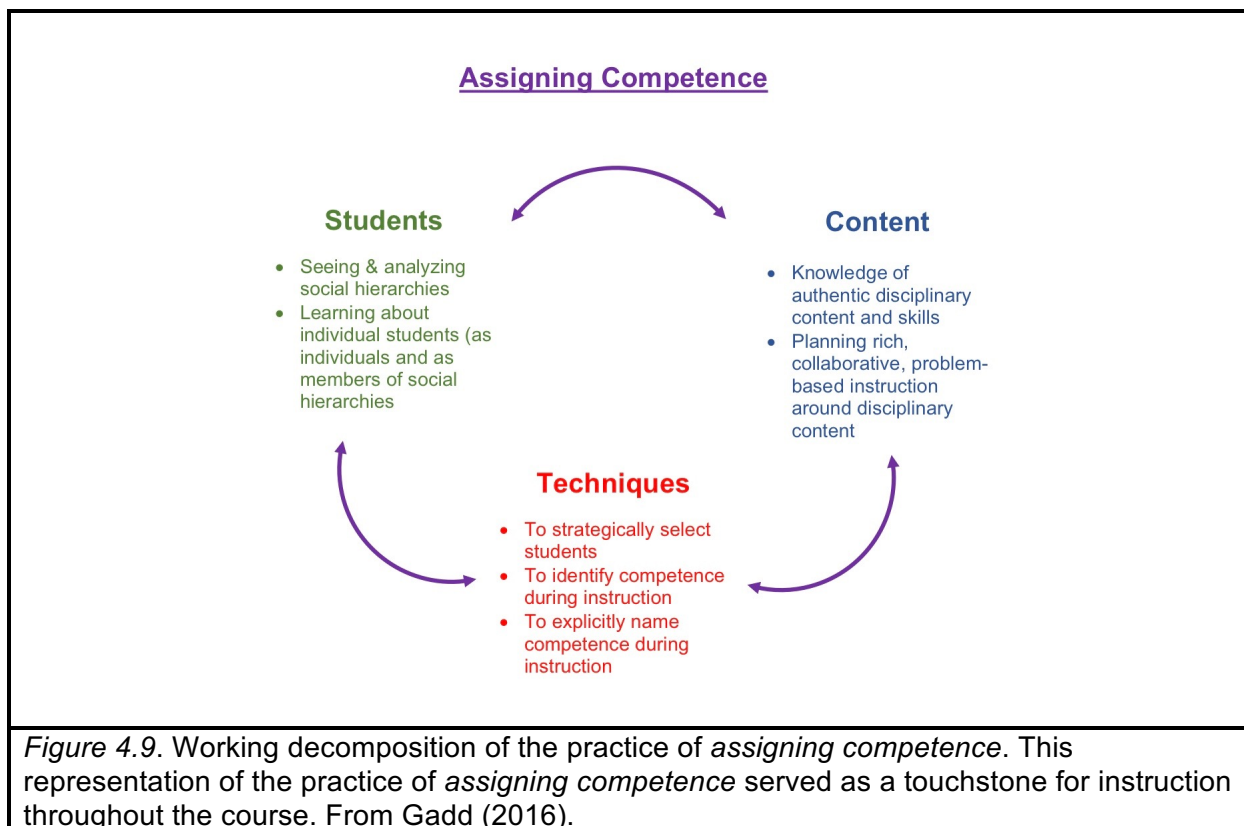
We went over the protocol together, I gave novices a moment to think about what they had done for their to-do item, and then I asked for a volunteer to get us started.

Zara began the discussion by sharing about one of her students who had recently disappeared from school for an extended period of time, despite having consistent attendance before that. When the child finally returned to school, Zara decided to investigate where she had been. As it turned out, the child and several of her family members had been in hiding for fear of getting caught by Immigration and Customs Enforcement who had conducted a series of recent raids in her neighborhood. Prior to this conversation, Zara had not realized that this girl was not an American citizen. She learned all of this by having an informal conversation with the child outside of class. As we progressed through the protocol, another novice, Whitney, asked Zara how she might adjust her classroom environment in the future as a result of this experience. This prompted Zara to reflect on several aspects of her practice that might

influence this child's ability to learn in her class. For instance, she related the girl's experiences to the Trump administration's travel ban targeting Muslim-majority countries, which had been announced just that week. The child that Zara had shared about was Afro-Caribbean, not Middle Eastern or Muslim, and Zara stated that she had not considered how talking about the travel ban as part of the current events curriculum might affect non-Muslim students.

Towards the end of this problems of practice discussion, the novices did begin to shift back into what I've characterized as more technical or mechanically-oriented talk about teaching. For instance, in the next chapter, I will discuss how I struggled to respond to Robert when he raised a technical question towards the end of this discussion. However, for the most part, the highly structured discussion protocol seemed to support novices in the way that I had hoped.

**Working decomposition.** Before transitioning into the student work activities, I shared my working decomposition of the practice of assigning competence with novices (Figure 4.9).



I gave them the decomposition as a handout and informed them that we would refer to it throughout the remainder of the mini-course. One of the novices, Zach, offered a recap of what they had read about assigning competence during Session 1. He defined the practice of assigning competence in part as: “Trying to reconstruct hierarchies that already exist in your classroom by using calculated strategies based on what you've seen and what you've learned” (Session 2, 00:30:44). I then briefly explained the areas of work as I’ve defined them—work with students, work with content, and work with techniques—and how they interact with one another with respect to the practice. I told the novices that we would be working for the rest of the evening in the space where knowledge of students and knowledge of content interacts.

**Student work.** We spent the remainder of the session engaged in a two-part activity to look at student work. I designed the first part of the activity, analyzing work

samples to learn about kids in relation to content, to build directly on our work in Session 1. The second part of the activity, considering one dilemma inherent in learning about kids, was intended to help them nuance their thinking about their work with kids and to begin to explore what I meant by a professional stance toward practice.

For the first student work activity, novices worked in groups of two or three to examine an eighth-grade writing sample.<sup>28</sup> I gave each group the sample, the assignment sheet that the sample was in response to, and some amount of background information about the student (Figure 4.10).

**Supplemental Information:**

- This letter was written in response to a newspaper article about the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom at which Dr. King gave his “I Have a Dream Speech.”
- Students were engaged in an extended study of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.
- This student was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when s/he wrote this letter.
- This student had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and received limited Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) five class periods (out of 30 periods total) per week.
- At the beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, this student had been unable to structure his/her writing in paragraphs and had struggled to include historical information in his/her social studies assignments.

*Figure 4.10.* Supplemental information for student work sample activity. All three groups received the information in black; group two also received the information in green; group one also received the information in green and blue.

Each group’s task was to look over the materials and decide together what they could learn about this kid based on the work sample. They were to report out both their conclusions and their evidence to the whole group (Figure 4.11).

<sup>28</sup> I do not have permission to share the student’s writing sample for publication.

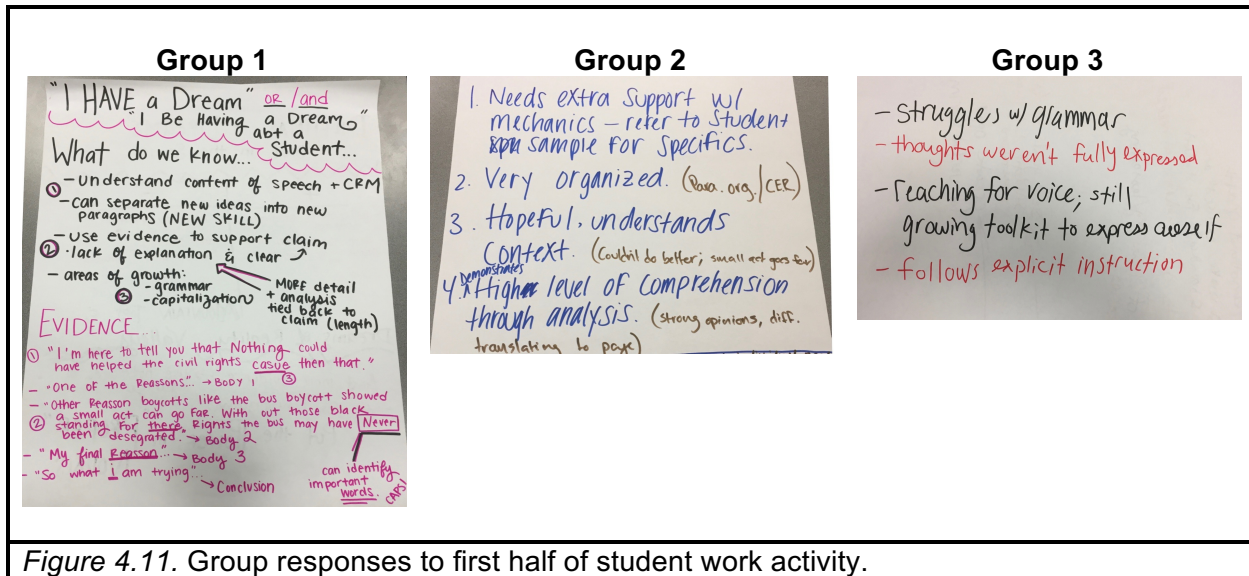


Figure 4.11. Group responses to first half of student work activity.

During the debrief, novices realized that they were all looking at the same work sample and began to consider how the information they had about the kid informed their assessment of his work. From there we segued into the second part of the activity: considering what I referred to as “the dilemma of knowing.” While we had spent the first session and the first half of this session arguing that teachers need to know as much about their students as possible in order to be able to effectively assign them competence, the first part of the student work activity and debrief showed that what teachers know or think they know about kids can also lead them to position kids in particular ways that may afford or constrain their opportunities to learn. For instance, groups two and three in Figure 4.11 above knew that the child was an eighth grader, and group two knew that he received special education support. Based on their expectations of what an eighth grader “should” be able to do, they framed their initial conclusions about this child in the negative: he struggles with grammar and mechanics, and he doesn’t fully express his thoughts. Neither of those groups generated ideas about the child’s strengths until I prompted them to during small group work.



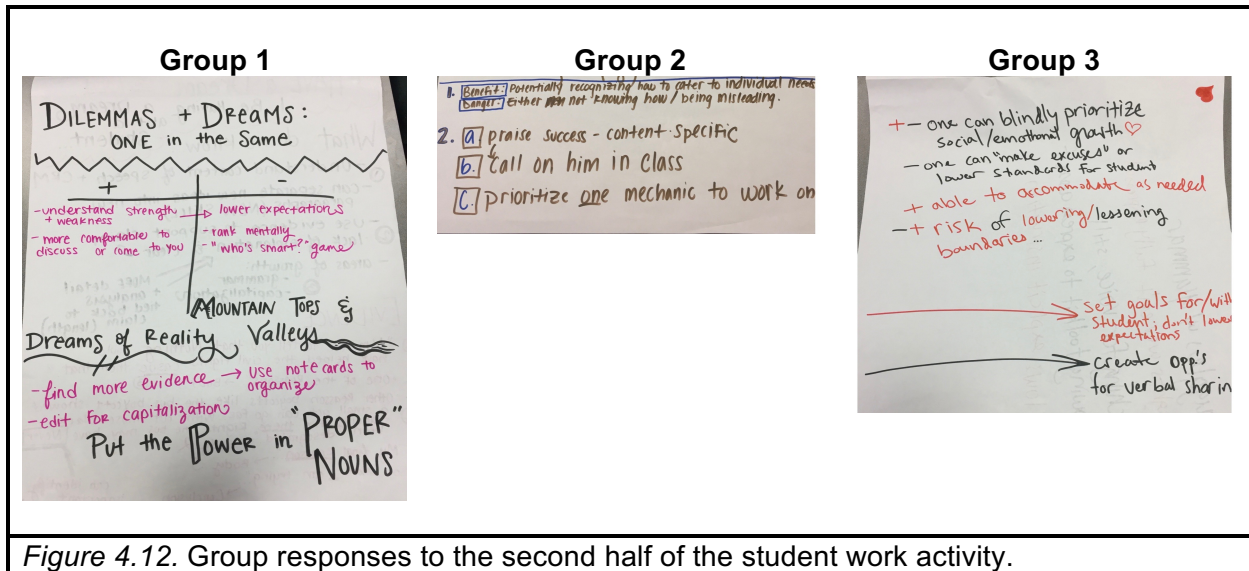
Group one, on the other hand, had more information about where the child had come from with respect to the content. After taking a moment at the beginning of group work to agree on what his main point was, Vicky told her partner:

**Vicky:** I think it's kind of cool that at the beginning of the year he was really struggling to put things in paragraphs. Like, he has an idea that a new paragraph is a new idea, right? I think it's just not fleshed out. (Session 2, 00:45:27)

Here Vicky's stance toward the child and his work is oriented towards identifying areas of growth and strength. Vicky and her partner did identify things that this kid needs to continue to work on based on this sample, but they positioned him more positively and with less prompting from me than either of the other two groups.

As we moved into the second half of the activity, I asked novices to consider the ways in which the information they had about the child influenced their thinking about him. I then introduced the idea of a dilemma of practice—that is, that there are many situations that teachers face where there is no “correct” answer, no straightforward strategy or tool they can use, because whatever path they choose will raise new problems to manage. For the second half of the activity, novices were to discuss with their groups what the dangers of “knowing” their kids might be and how they as teachers might work to manage those dangers. They were to then suggest possible next steps for this child based on his work sample and on their discussion about managing this dilemma of knowing.

Figure 4.12 contains the charts each group produced for this part of the activity.



My field notes and transcripts from this session reflect the very different discussions that each group had as they produced their charts. Group one, Mariam and Vicky, noted that learning more about kids would allow teachers to have a better sense of their learning needs; they also talked about the importance of establishing “real” relationships with kids, which is reflected in their chart as “more comfortable to discuss or come to you.” However, they worried about the dangers inherent in lowering expectations for kids by giving them too much leeway and about either overtly or covertly ranking the kids in their classes. Group two had a much more contentious discussion. They spent several minutes arguing over how they should think about identifying potential dangers of knowing about kids. Talia took the position that they should identify features that could advantage or disadvantage the child, while Zach’s initial reaction was to say that, as a teacher, he would feel overwhelmed if he knew his kids “too well” because he might have so much information that he wouldn’t know how to best help them. Group three discussed the relative affordances and constraints of prioritizing kids’ social-emotional development versus their academic growth. For instance, as they discussed how to

encourage the child whose work they'd examined, they worried about giving him a false sense of his academic progress for the sake of making him feel good about himself.

During the debrief, the discussion turned from this “dilemma of knowing” to another teaching dilemma, what we came to call the “agent of the state dilemma.” Talia raised the idea that knowing kids well and thinking carefully about how to best position them can contribute to their sense of agency. Vicky responded:

**Vicky:** I think it's dope. I think sometimes I just run the risk of like—I don't know, it just sometimes it just seems are they ever going to ask to be like do this ... And narrowing down does that lessen the rigor for them ... Sometimes I just wonder how much when they go out, or when we go out in the real world we're actually asked for our real opinion and not a prescriptive idea of what we're actually supposed to say. And so then it's like, am I actually preparing you to survive in America? (Session 2, 01:42:28)

Vicky's concern in response to Talia's point about cultivating agency seemed to be that if teachers cared too much about kids' agency and sense of well-being, they might not prepare kids for the “real world.” She argued that “survival” often depends on being able to conform to external expectations not exercising agency. She also raised the question here of what constitutes rigor. I responded:

**Rebecca:** Well, survival is important, and you've mentioned that theme a couple of times since I've been coming to this class. But you have also talked about—and several people in here have also talked about—subversiveness, subverting the system. So maybe that's a question to ask too is like, yeah we gotta prepare them to survive, but how do we prepare them to push back? And is there rigor in that? So how do you guys think about that question, or about our initial question? (Session 2, 01:43:21)

Robert initially responded that he wasn't sure how to make that call. Then, Zara said:

**Zara:** Well I think prioritizing is that—is it worth it in this moment to be subversive because subversive is kind of a danger connotation when you think of that. But I don't: when people call me subversive, thank you. I'm proud to be subversive, especially when it's needed to be. Teaching our

students how to directly do that and how to advocate for themselves and not be, when you be subversive not be removed and left to speak the truth or have a voice in that space. (Session 2, 01:44:39)

Here Zara is advancing the argument that teachers should help kids learn to push back on the system—to subvert it rather than to conform to it—so that kids can “have a voice in that space.”

**Workshop.** At this point, we were running out of time, so I had to draw the discussion to a close. I highlighted for novices that the dilemma that Vicky and Zara had raised about conforming versus subverting power structures related to Zach’s earlier definition of assigning competence as having to do with “reconstructing” established hierarchies. I then told them that their to-do item for our next session was to identify places in their school or classroom environments where kids were constructed as competent or incompetent and to come next time prepared to discuss at least one example of each. We quickly brainstormed possible places they might look in their contexts (e.g., attendance records, curricular materials), and novices wrote down their plans on post-it notes before leaving for the evening.

### **Session Three**

The program-wide special topic session took place between Sessions 2 and 3, meaning that four weeks elapsed between Sessions 2 and 3 of the mini-course. Additionally, there was another program-wide meeting scheduled for the final 30 minutes of this class session, requiring us to end early. Thus, as I designed this session, I was concerned about reestablishing my rapport with novices as well as reestablishing continuity with our work on the focal practice. I sought to build on the ideas that had emerged during the previous session around conformity and subversion

and the construction and reconstruction of competence. My goals for this session were for novices to develop a critical lens for analyzing the intersection of racism with their own and others' teaching practice and to generate preliminary strategies to interrupt racialized status hierarchies and assign competence to marginalized students. In addition to the problems of practice discussion and to-do item, this session included three activities: (1) developing a shared definition of systemic racism based on a common text; (2) applying that definition as a critical analytic lens to an instance of teaching practice; and (3) applying that same critical analytic lens to novices' own practice to interrogate their understanding of what it means to be smart or competent in secondary ELA.

**Problems of practice.** After the improvement I'd seen in the problems of practice discussion from Session 1 to Session 2, I planned to return to the same highly-structured discussion protocol for this session. I gave novices a few moments to turn and talk with a partner about instances in which they'd seen competence assigned or withheld over the preceding month, I displayed the protocol (see Figure 4.8 above) and quickly reviewed how it worked. Before we could begin, two novices, Talia and Leah, asked about the definition of assigning competence. Talia reported that her group for the turn and talk were confused about how to describe kids who had high competence and whether competence referred to academic or social competence. Leah agreed and noted that this had been a question for her since our first session together.

Rather than taking up their points to launch the problems of practice discussion, I tried to turn us back to the protocol and asked for a volunteer to describe their to-do item. I told them that I thought our discussion would help to clarify the issues Talia and

Leah had raised. At first, there was an awkward silence as no one seemed eager to go first. Finally, Mariam volunteered and told us about her efforts to re-arrange the seating in her room so that “students who I thought were more of a lower level—whether it was reading level or [inaudible]—with a high” (Mariam, Session 3, 00:13:17). She identified this as an instance of her constructing her student’s competence and indicated that in this case she was defining competence by students’ reading ability. However, as we moved through the rounds of clarifying and analytic questions, only one other novice, Robert, contributed to the discussion. In addition, after Mariam’s initial description of thinking about the seating in terms of competence, she reframed her point in terms of behavior management. I attempted to link back to Talia’s and Leah’s questions about what exactly “competence” refers to by noting that Mariam seemed to be defining competence in two ways: academic and behavioral. But this part of the discussion never seemed to gain much traction.

As we moved to the round of the discussion in which novices could pose hypotheses, Vicky said, “sometimes I wonder like who defines and creates competence in the sense it's always—it can never like really be assigned or withheld” (Vicky, Session 3, 00:16:44). She elaborated that she questioned whether teachers could actually assign competence to kids since kids had to decide for themselves what constitutes competence. This led us into a brief discussion of agency and how teachers define student agency. Zach and Robert both pointed out that often teachers define student agency in ways that best serve the teacher’s needs. This was an idea that we would return to during our discussion of racism and teaching practice later in the session.

**Developing a definition.** We next moved into an activity to develop a shared working definition of the term “racism.” I designed this activity based on work done in another course (Goldin & Khasnabis, 2017) so that we could build a shared understanding of racism as a structural process of oppression that informs all facets of American social life, including the work of teaching. I anticipated that some novices might already understand racism as a systemic problem, while others would think of it as a problem of individual bad behavior or moral failing, and I wanted to establish a conceptual common ground from which we could work. Additionally, during our planning meeting, Shoshana raised the issue of racism being treated in academic spaces as an abstraction “in a way that distances and renders it just like it's this, you know, scholarly exercise” (Shoshana meeting, 03/15/17). In order to buffer against this, I transitioned from the problems of practice discussion to the definition activity by first talking with novices about the real experiences of pain and risk that they might be bringing with them into our work during this session. I acknowledged that my own identity as a White woman might engender some legitimate skepticism amongst them about whether or not I was capable of facilitating this work in a productive way. I also talked about how their experiences with racism as either targets or beneficiaries of a racist society might inform their expectations about the upcoming work. I gave them a few moments to reflect independently about whatever they might be feeling as we prepared to move into the rest of the evening's activities.

We began our definition activity by watching the theatrical trailer for the movie / *Am Not Your Negro*, based on work by James Baldwin. The trailer contains snippets of

narration, imagery, and excerpts from Baldwin's public appearances that speak to the impact of race and racism in American society (Figure 4.13).

**James Baldwin:** If any White man in the world says, "Give me liberty or give me death," the entire White world applauds. When a Black man says *exactly* the same thing, he is judged criminal, and treated like one, and everything possible is done to make an example of this bad nigger so there won't be any more like him.

[Song: I've been low, I've been high. I've been low, I've been high.]

**Narrator:** The story of the Negro in America is the story of America. It is not a pretty story.

[Song: I'm a Black man in a White world.]

**Baldwin:** Most of the White Americans I've ever encountered truly have nothing whatever against Negroes—that's really not the question. Really a kind of apathy and ignorance. You don't know what's happening on the other side of the wall because you don't want to know.

**Narrator:** "In America I was free only in battle but never free to rest."

**Malcolm X:** We need to take action, any kind of action by any means necessary.

**Baldwin:** They needed us to pick the cotton, and now they don't need us anymore. Now they don't need us, they're gonna kill us all off ... There are days when you wonder what your role is in this country, and what your future is in it ... I can't be a pessimist because I'm alive ... The question you gotta ask yourself—the White population of this country's gotta ask itself is why was it necessary to have a nigger in the first place? Because I'm not a nigger. I'm a man. But if you think I'm a nigger, it means you need it. And you've gotta find out why. And the future of the country depends on that.

*Figure 4.13.* Transcript of the official trailer of *I Am Not Your Negro*. The trailer and transcript served as our common texts for generating a working group definition of racism.

After watching the clip twice, novices worked in small groups for several minutes to generate a definition of racism based on this text. I emphasized that they should confine their definition to this text because it was our shared point of reference. We then reconvened to generate a class definition. Each group shared out the main points of their discussion, and I did my best to summarize and synthesize their ideas in a PowerPoint slide. The working definition that we came up with is in Figure 4.14.



### Group Definition of Racism

- A **construct** created by White people to “**benefit**” White people socially, politically, and economically.
- **Perpetuated by ignorance** and **upheld by an unwillingness to learn** because of perceived benefit to people in power.
- **Choice and need**—willful ignorance, Baldwin talked about people needing the system to justify, willful suspension of disbelief, **evolution from material “need” (i.e., labor) to psychic need**, makes it easier to deny and rationalize
- **Fragile state of identity**—to validate yourself you need to invalidate others
- **Veiled, pervasive system of oppression**—it’s hard to point out until someone tries to access privilege or opportunities that aren’t automatically given to that group
- Innate lack of freedom within a society—is that built into the individual or does the individual fall into that category

*Figure 4.14.* Working group definition of racism. We referred to this definition across the activity sequence to critically examine teaching practice. Bolded words and phrases reflect verbatim contributions from novices.

**Applying to another’s practice.** Next, novices practiced using our definition as a critical lens on teaching practice by applying it to a viral video of a classroom incident. In the video, which was surreptitiously recorded by a teacher’s aide, a White woman teacher sits in a circle with her mostly Latinx and Black students in a first-grade classroom in Brooklyn, New York. The teacher berates a girl who has offered an incorrect answer during a math lesson, tearing up the girl’s paper and sending her to “the calm down chair” away from the rest of the group. The teacher tells the class that it makes her very upset when students don’t do “what’s on your paper.” The video ends with another child volunteering the correct procedure (Figure 4.15).

**Teacher:** That's the one you ...?

**First Child:** [inaudible]

**Teacher:** You cut or you split. So count it *again*, making sure you're counting correctly ...  
*Count.*

**First Child:** One ... two

**Teacher:** [rips up paper] Go to the calm down chair and sit! There's *nothing* that infuriates me more than when you don't do what's on your paper. Somebody come up, and show me how she should have counted to get her answer that was one and a split. Show my friends and teach them.

**Second Child:** One and a split.

**Teacher:** Thank you. Do *not* go back to your seat and show me one thing and then don't do it here. You're confusing everybody. I'm very upset and very disappointed.

*Figure 4.15.* Transcript of classroom teaching practice video. We used the video and transcript of this teacher to practice applying our group definition of racism to teaching practice.

I stipulated at the outset of this activity that novices were going to see an instance of an individual teacher acting badly. However, I told them that the point was for them to draw connections between the systemic definition of racism we developed in the previous activity and on-the-ground teaching practice. After watching the clip, novices worked with their groups to connect the two videos, using our group definition of racism as a guide. Additionally, I asked novices to consider the ways in which racism as we defined it appeared in the video with respect to the three areas of work reflected in our decomposition of assigning competence: students, content, and pedagogical techniques. In other words, I asked novices to consider, for example, how our shared definition of racism showed up in this teacher's handling of instructional content.

As with the Baldwin video, I showed this clip twice and then gave novices several minutes in their small groups to discuss what they had seen. When we returned to the

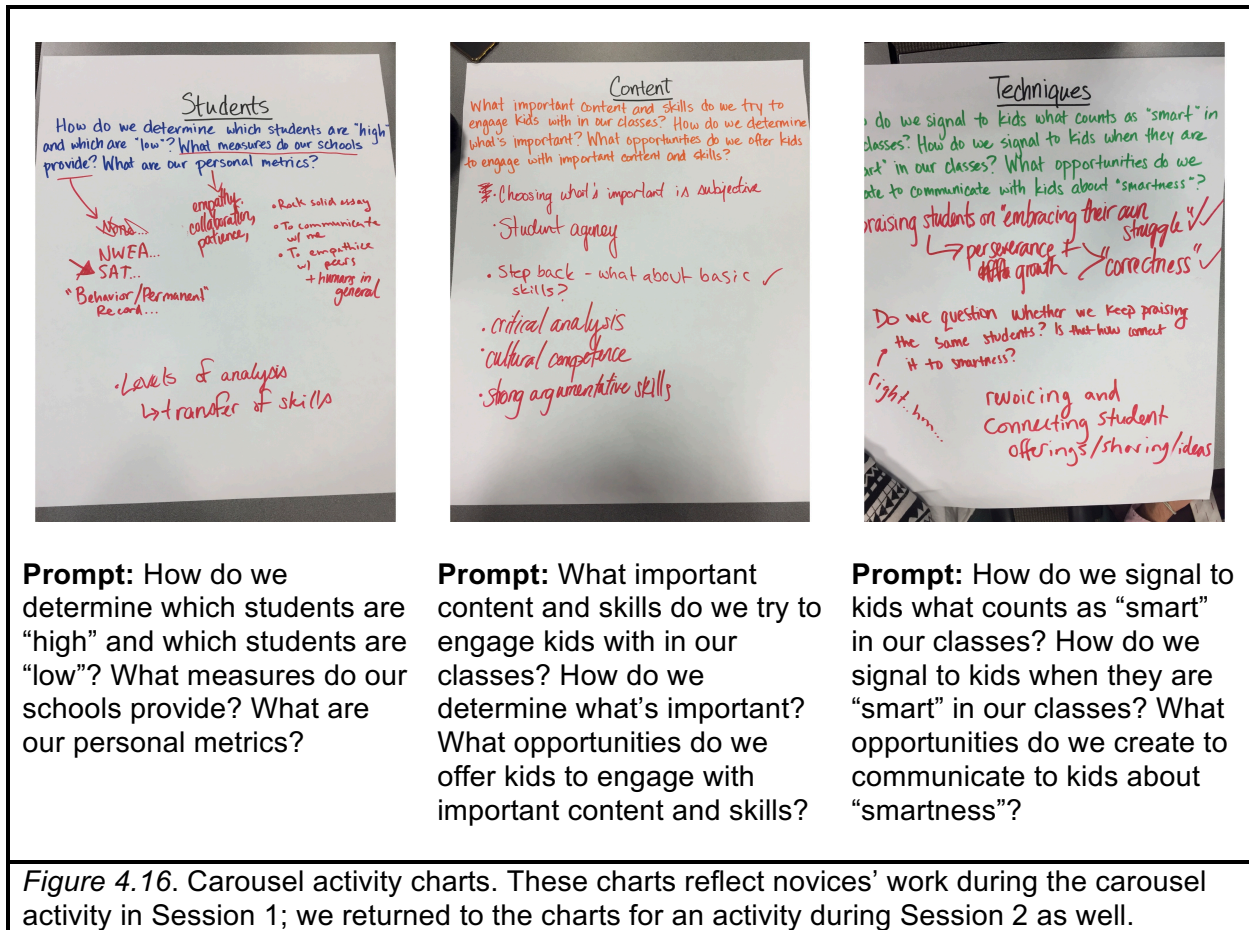
large group discussion, several novices voiced their initial shock and dismay at how the teacher had behaved. Robert commented on the apparent focus—from the way kids were sitting on the rug to the little girl’s problem-solving procedure—on controlling kids’ bodies and minds. Valerie wondered aloud whether it was a coincidence that the teacher worked in a school that primarily served kids of color. Then Mariam noted that her group had talked about how when the teacher had the little boy at the end of the video demonstrate the correct problem-solving procedure, the teacher was acting to highlight his competence as a way of further controlling the class: “So it just like became such a condescending dynamic between the two—like a really oppressive and privileging dynamic at the same time. Her tone of voice too” (Mariam, Session 3, 01:06:11).

This led to several minutes of discussion in which novices made connections between the ways in which the teacher framed content and interacted with students and our definitions of both racism and assigning competence. Multiple novices commented on the way that the teacher’s work to narrow the content oppressed students, especially the little girl she sent out of the group. In particular, the novices were unsure as to what the content actually was beyond her demand that students use a precise procedure, which we were unable to understand based on what was captured in the clip. Felicia compared it to the pressures she felt to control kids in her own classroom:

**Felicia:** Because how many times have I been taught MVP directions and *Teach Like a Champion*? Like, be silent, stand up when I tell you to, sit down when I tell you to, don't get up, don't do that. And how many times do I do that still in my classroom, you know? And that's very singular way of—limiting way of looking at the way the classroom can function based on that [inaudible] privilege and oppression. (Felicia, Session 3, 01:07:00)

A moment later, Valerie brought the discussion back to the agent of the state dilemma we had discussed during our previous session. She asked, “how do you fight against that?” (Valerie, Session 3, 01:09:32) because, she argued, the reality is that people will make negative assumptions about kids of color if they don’t follow the rules exactly. She indicated that she thought this issue was related to the issue of how the teacher in the video defined content but that she was unsure of how to articulate that connection.

**Interrogating our own practice.** I used Valerie’s contribution to transition to a closing carousel activity in which novices were to apply the critical lens we were developing to their own teaching practice. Specifically, they were to consider what it means to be “smart” in secondary ELA and how they, as classroom teachers, construct “smartness” for their kids. Novices started out in new small groups at one of three charts corresponding to the components of our decomposition: students, content, or techniques. Each chart also contained a focal question (Figure 4.16).



During the first round of the carousel, novices worked with their groups to respond to the question on their first chart; in the subsequent two rounds, novices rotated to the remaining charts and had the option to either respond to the focal question or to ideas that other groups had recorded on that chart. For the final round, I had planned for novices to work with their groups in googledocs to reflect on one of the charts using the lens of our shared definition of racism. Each group was to respond to the three analytic questions listed in Figure 4.17 below. However, due to technical difficulties, the groups were unable to complete this final phase of the activity that evening.

- (1) Who (i.e., which students or groups of students) are the winners and losers here?
- (2) What student assets/strengths does this allow the teacher to uncover and honor?  
What student assets/strengths does it devalue and/or obscure?
- (3) What's the story here about systemic racism and schooling? What might future critics say about us as participants in this system?

*Figure 4.17. Critical questions. We used these three core questions, adapted from Goldin and Khasnabis (2017), in conjunction with our group definition of racism as a critical lens for interrogating the intersections of racism and teaching practice.*

**Workshop.** We spent so much time trying to get the googledocs working, that we didn't have time for our workshop before the program meeting began. I informed novices that I would include the carousel reflection in the next session and that I would email their to-do item to them. For their to-do item, they were to select one area of work of assigning competence (i.e., students, content, or pedagogical techniques) and make one move to explicitly and intentionally push back on racism in that area.

#### **Session Four**

Initially, I had planned for Session 4 to be an in-person meeting. However, I was informed by the regular instructor and several of the novices that they had previously agreed to conduct this session online so that novices could travel during their schools' spring breaks. The only guideline I received for the online session was that it should approximate two hours of class time. This was the only session for which the program allowed me to assign novices any out-of-class work. For this online session, I created a website with instructional content and four assignments that novices were to complete at some point during the four-week window between Sessions 3 and 5 (Figure 4.18, Appendix B).

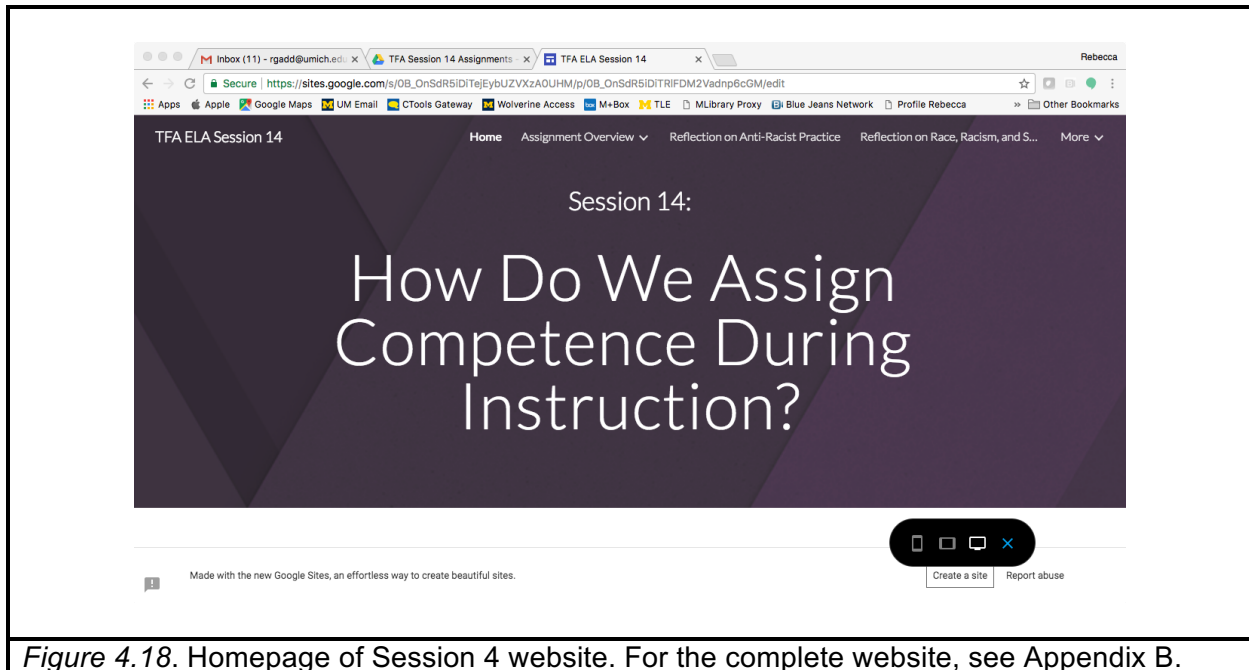


Figure 4.18. Homepage of Session 4 website. For the complete website, see Appendix B.

**First and second assignments.** The first assignment was a two-to-three paragraph reflection on the novices' to-do item from Session 3. Novices were to briefly describe what they tried, say why they tried that thing by explicitly connecting their reasoning to our group definition of racism, and then reflect on what they learned about practice from this experience. The second assignment was a continuation of the carousel reflection activity that we were unable to complete at the end of the preceding session. I posted photos of the three charts that novices had created during the carousel (see Figure 4.16 above), our group definition of racism, and the decomposition of the practice of assigning competence. I directed novices to take 30-45 minutes total to review the charts and supporting materials and respond to the three critical reflection questions I introduced during the previous session.

**Third assignment.** Novices were to spend the bulk of their time for this online session completing Assignment 3, a *multiple abilities treatment* of one of their own lessons. A *multiple abilities treatment* (MAT) is one strategy that teachers can use to

help themselves design lessons that will enable them to intervene on status inequities (Cohen et al., 1999; Featherstone et al., 2011). A teacher creates an MAT after planning a lesson but prior to teaching it by reviewing the lesson to identify all the different kinds of “smarts” (e.g., skills, content knowledge, talents, etc.) that students will need to be successful during the lesson. Teachers then share the MAT with students at the start of the lesson to set the expectation that all students will have some contribution to make to the work. By expanding students’ ideas about what can be considered smart during the lesson, teachers position students as capable and position themselves to be able to assign competence as opportunities arise.

Novices read a brief article, “Complex Instruction: Equity in Cooperative Learning Classrooms” (Cohen et al., 1999), to learn about MATs. They were then to select a lesson they had already taught and that was representative of their practice and do two things with it. First, they were to create an MAT for that lesson, using the article as a guide. Next, they were to critically analyze both the lesson plan and the MAT using the critical lens that we had developed during the previous session. In other words, they were to consider the areas of work of the decomposition of the practice and our working definition of racism and then answer versions of our three critical reflection questions from the previous session about their lesson and MAT (Figure 4.19).



- (1) Who are the winners and losers in your lesson and MAT? In other words, which students or types of students are advantaged and which are disadvantaged? What makes you think so?
- (2) What student assets/strengths do your lesson and MAT allow you to uncover and honor? What student assets/strengths do they devalue and/or obscure?
- (3) What do your lesson and MAT reflect about systemic racism and schooling? What might future researchers and critics say about you as a participant in this system?

*Figure 4.19. Critical questions for Session 4 MAT assignment. I adapted the three core questions (Goldin & Khasnabis, 2017) from Session 3 for this assignment.*

**Fourth assignment.** Finally, novices were to complete their next to-do item sometime in the two weeks between completing the online session and our final in-person meeting. The prompt for this to-do item was the same as for the previous session, except that I asked them to switch the site of their work. So, for example, if they had attempted an anti-racist move with reference to their work with students for the previous assignment, they should switch and try some anti-racist move with respect to content or pedagogical techniques for this assignment. I informed them that we would begin our next session with a discussion of the moves they had tried across the two to-do items.

### **Session Five**

Session 5 was the final meeting of the mini-course. I intended for this session to pull together the instructional threads we had worked on across our time together. I divided the session up into two, unequal chunks. During the first, shorter, chunk, novices participated in a gallery walk and discussion of the work they did around anti-racist practice for the two previous to-do items. For the second chunk, which took up the remaining two-thirds of class time, novices completed a case study activity in small groups focused on the practice of assigning competence.

**Problems of practice gallery walk.** I set up the gallery walk discussion by creating three charts, one for each area of work of assigning competence. I then culled through novices' reflections on their first attempts at anti-racist moves (Session 4, Assignment 1) and identified the various moves that they'd tried. I wrote each move on a post-it note and placed the post-its on the relevant chart. For instance, one novice reported that she had tried to push back on systemic racism by taking several kids out to lunch to learn more about them as individuals; I categorized this contribution as work with students. When novices arrived for the session, I gave them each a blank post-it and asked them to record the second anti-racist move they had attempted (Session 4, Assignment 4). I then gave them a moment to decide which chart their post-it belonged on and to categorize their moves. Once everyone placed their post-its, they had five minutes to visit each of the charts and read over what their colleagues had tried. I prompted them to consider questions like: "What did folks try?" "What 'grain size' did folks try their moves at (e.g., working with a single kid vs. designing a whole new unit)?" "Is there anything missing here that I wish someone had tried? Why?"

After the gallery walk, we reconvened as a class and used the gallery walk as a launch point for our problems of practice discussion. I decided not to return to the discussion protocol we'd used in the previous two in-person sessions because it hadn't felt as useful during the Session 3 discussion and because I wanted to be able to move a little more quickly into the case study activity than I thought the protocol would allow. So, I gave novices the option to start with any of the prompting questions I listed in the previous paragraph.

Leah made the first contribution to the discussion by noting that the grain size of moves novices had tried “was all over the place,” which she felt was important:

**Leah:** You can't just go for trying to make like really large scale changes every day because you're gonna burn yourself out super quickly. And it's really important to have one-on-one interactions with, like, on just a me and you, one student level instead of maybe your whole class. But you need those too, so I think it's good that there's such big variety. (Session 5, 00:16:58)

Rather than responding to this point, the next novice to speak, Zara, instead asked a question about one of the post-its on which a novice had recorded that she or he had tried having disruptive students stand in the hallway outside of the classroom rather than sending them to the office. Zara and then Whitney shared that they had also developed behavior management strategies to keep kids in their rooms rather than sending them to the office. Whitney framed it as a way to give her high schoolers the opportunity to self-regulate and reflect on their behavior before rejoining the class. Zara, who taught middle school, framed her strategies as a way to limit her participation in the school-to-prison pipeline. At this point in the evening, my recording equipment failed, so, while the discussion continued for several turns of talk after this, I have no record in transcripts or my field notes about what happened.

**Case study.** After the discussion, we transitioned into the case study activity. I split novices into two groups of four and gave each group the following: a description of the task and group roles; a case packet that included a two-page summary of a secondary writing unit, “today’s” lesson plan, a description of the one small group’s work, descriptions of the four students in the focal group, and an excerpt of the focal

group’s discussion from class that day; the Common Core State Standards<sup>29</sup> for writing in grades 6-12; a copy of our group definition of racism; a copy of the definition of assigning competence; and response packets for individuals to record their responses to the case tasks. Novices were to work with their groups to read through the case materials and complete the case tasks. The first task was for novices to analyze the plan for “today’s lesson” using the critical questions and areas of work that we had been using throughout this activity sequence (Figure 4.20).

<p><b>Part 1: Critically Analyzing Today's Lesson</b> Using our group definition of racism (see supporting documents) as a lens, respond to the questions below for each area of practice we have discussed.</p>
<p><b>Who are the winners and losers in the instruction presented here? What makes you think so?</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Students</b></p> <p>Which "types" of students are privileged/disprivileged by the instruction described here? Which of the focal students (Dasya, Destiny, Mo, Terrence) are privileged/disprivileged by the instruction described here? Why?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Content</b></p> <p>What assumptions about student identities and/or background knowledge are explicit and/or implicit in the content described here? Explain.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Techniques</b></p> <p>What assumptions about student identities and/or background knowledge are explicit and/or implicit in the pedagogical techniques described here? Explain.</p>

*Figure 4.20. Sample page from case study response packet. This page of the response packet asked novices to apply our critical lens to the sample lesson plan provided in the case study.*

Next, novices worked with their groups to plan “tomorrow’s lesson.” For this task, I gave them an essential question that aligned with the unit described in the packet, and

<sup>29</sup> Novices worked for schools in a number of charter networks as well as a nearby large urban school district. I selected the Common Core Standards because novices either used them or used standards documents that mapped very closely to them.

I identified the Common Core standards that the lesson should address. Their job was to devise the remainder of the plan, including a bullet-pointed MAT they could share with students at the beginning of the lesson. Finally, they were to work as a group to critically reflect on the lesson, identifying the ways in which it was responsive to the work we had been doing on anti-racist practice and the practice of assigning competence. In particular, they were to identify specific features of their planned work with students, content, and pedagogical techniques that reflected efforts to assign competence to students during the lesson. Novices had 75 minutes to work on the case study activity with their groups, after which we held a whole class debrief.

Next, I turn to my analysis of the work I engaged in as the teacher educator in this course.

## Chapter 5

### What I Learned

The question that guided this study was:

What is involved in the work for a teacher educator to translate anti-racist practice from the research literature into a professional script for teaching that can be taught in practice-based teacher education?

Specifically, my goal was to investigate how a teacher educator teaches the practice of assigning competence to novices in a way that supports their development of a professional script for the practice. A professional script would define the patterns of moves with respect to students and content that make up the practice as only those consistent with professional ethical commitments to anti-racism and equity.<sup>30</sup> As I designed and taught the mini-course, my work as a teacher educator was interconnected with my goals as a researcher. That is, I used principles of the professional scripts construct to understand the practice and to design and enact practice-based instruction in ways that would support my novices in beginning to develop their professional scripts for enacting the practice in their classrooms.

In this chapter, I will discuss four important facets of this teacher education work. based on analyses of the data I collected across the mini-course. Although each of these demands emerged in particular ways that are situated within the specific context

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<sup>30</sup> See chapter 2 for more on professional scripts.

of this study, I argue that they reflect endemic requirements of practice-based teacher education work aimed at anti-racist practice. They are therefore significant beyond my own practice and context. The four facets focus on the work of (1) forming productive pedagogical relationships with novices in order to teach anti-racist practice; (2) connecting instruction in the practice to the professional ethics of the practice; (3) developing a decomposition of the focal practice that both captures its complexity and somehow reflects enactment; and (4) designing meaningful approximations of the focal practice.

### **Cultivating Productive Pedagogical Relationships**

The work of teaching, no matter the subject or student body, is dependent on the teacher's ability to establish a productive pedagogical relationship with her students (Cohen, 2011b). This relational work underpins other kinds of work teachers must do to engage students in instruction. To a certain extent this kind of relational work can be conceptualized as building trust or rapport between teacher and students so that the students will trust the teacher enough to try to learn from her, and the teacher will trust the students enough to take the pedagogical risks necessary to teach them. Indeed, in my case, I did find that I made moves throughout the mini-course to build trust or, at least, rapport. Definitions and descriptions of some of these moves are in Table 5.1 below. I would expect to find evidence of these same kinds of moves in any study of the work of teacher education because of how foundational pedagogical relationships are to the work of instruction.

Table 5.1 <i>Sample Relational Codes</i>		
Area of Work	Move	Example
Building Rapport	Engaging in banter with individuals and the group	<b>Rebecca:</b> “I know it’s the end of the long day, but you can laugh at me, it’s fine.” (Session 1)
	Identifying common experiences of teaching	<b>Rebecca:</b> “I was one of those teachers who would carry the pile back and forth from my class to my house, thinking that I was gonna grade at night, and then not grade and take it back to the school the next day.” (Session 2)
	Offering material resources to novices for use in their teaching practice	<b>Rebecca:</b> “I had found the entire unit plan for the Civil Rights unit that I did ... If there’s anybody else who wants that, could you shoot me an email tonight to remind me ...” (Session 2)
	Demonstrating care towards individuals or the group	<b>Rebecca:</b> “I brought snacks for you.” (Session 5)
<i>Note.</i> These are examples of the kinds of relational work that I did during this mini-course that I would expect to do in any teacher education course.		

In the case of teacher education focused on cultivating novices’ scripts for an anti-racist practice such as assigning competence, though, teacher educators’ relational work takes on added layers of complexity. First, race and racism are likely to be uncomfortable topics for novices, if not also for their teacher educators. Teacher education (like the teaching profession generally) is a White-dominated field: most novice teachers and teacher educators are White, and, as has been argued throughout this dissertation, participants’ values and assumptions—that is, their scripts—about how teacher education should function, what is worth learning, and who the work of teaching is for are all deeply informed by Whiteness. White people, used to operating within



White-dominated physical and intellectual spaces, often have negative reactions to discourse around race and racism, such as exhibiting White fragility, expecting and depending on the extension of White comfort, and invoking discourses of violence to undermine claims of racism (DiAngelo, 2011; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014; Gadd, in progress; Haviland, 2008). White fragility often manifests in a tendency for White folks to become defensive or to withdraw during discussions of race and racism; White comfort refers to social moves that White folks make to relieve their own or other Whites' perceived tension around race and racism (e.g., changing the subject; making a joke); and invoking discourses of violence involves the tendency of White folks, especially in racially heterogeneous groups, to characterize discussions of race and racism as if they were physically threatening (e.g., saying one feels "attacked" or "unsafe" when her statements on race are critiqued, especially if the critique comes from a person of color). Each of these reactions tend to shut down discourse around race and racism.

Further, for novices of color, race and racism may be uncomfortable topics because they may find themselves positioned as the de facto "experts" with the attendant expectation that they explain racism to White peers regardless of their own expertise or experience (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). They may also find themselves positioned as the "bad guy" by White peers or teacher educators if they discuss race and racism in ways that Whites resent or contest (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). Or they may themselves be so steeped in dominant White ideology that they exhibit similar difficulties to their White peers when confronted with issues of race and racism in teaching (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016).

Moreover, professional scripts for anti-racist practice are likely to run counter to the common scripts for teaching with which novices are most familiar and may even run counter to those that they consider “best practices.” Novices are likely to enter teacher education with well-established common scripts and a strong sense that they know something about what good teaching looks like. They may have little or no experience with the kind of anti-racist practice that teacher educators aim to teach. In other words, in anti-racist teacher education, concepts (i.e., race and racism) that are likely to make novices uniquely uncomfortable are tied to practices with which novices are likely to be unfamiliar and that probably run counter to their existing scripts for teaching.

Complicating this work even further, I also faced specific programmatic features that acted as constraints on my ability to establish productive pedagogical relationships with my novices. I anticipated some of these constraints based on my experience as a teacher educator and my reading of the research literature on teacher education. For instance, I expected to have to do work to establish both structural and conceptual coherence across the mini-course (Bain & Moje, 2012; Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, & Ronfeldt, 2008; Hammerness, 2006). I anticipated that this would be an especially salient issue given the program’s bi-weekly class meeting schedule. I planned from the start to include design features and make instructional moves to build and maintain my pedagogical relationship with novices across these temporal gaps (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 <i>Sample Coherence Codes</i>		
Area of Work	Move	Example
Cultivating Coherence	Picking up instructional threads	I took pictures of the charts novices created at the end of Session 3 for use in one of the Session 4 online assignments.
	Standing structures	The to-do items and problems of practice structures complemented one another, connecting the end of one Session with the beginning of the next, as well as providing a course-field connection.
	Offering material resources to novices for use in their teaching practice	<b>Rebecca:</b> “I had found the entire unit plan for the Civil Rights unit that I did ... If there's anybody else who wants that, could you shoot me an email tonight to remind me ...” (Session 2)
<i>Note.</i> These are examples of the kinds of work I did from the beginning of the course to cultivate coherence across the multi-week gaps between each course session.		

What I did not expect was to have to navigate a program culture that seemed to reinforce novices’ common scripts for practice and undermine the work I was trying to do with them. To be clear, I did not expect the program to promote professional scripts as I have defined them—that wouldn’t make sense as professional scripts are a construct that I have devised in my work towards this dissertation. However, I was unprepared for the extent to which the program’s culture seemed to not only rely on but encourage novices’ common scripts for teaching and how that would complicate my efforts to establish productive pedagogical relationships with them.

In this section, I begin by examining these programmatic constraints and their implications for building pedagogical relationships with novices. I then turn to an

analysis of the relational work I did to navigate Whiteness—my Whiteness, Whiteness as a feature of my interactions with novices, and the Whiteness of teacher education as an intellectual space. Both the programmatic constraints and my efforts to navigate Whiteness influenced the quality of pedagogical relationships I could form with novices, which in turn informed the work I could do to try to cultivate their professional scripts.

### **Programmatic Constraints and Common Scripts for Teaching**

Managing the programmatic context is a feature of all teaching. In K-12 teaching, for example, teachers must routinely do things like adapt lessons based on available materials, work around scheduled and unscheduled interruptions to instruction (e.g., fire drills, snow days), and conform to expectations inherent in state standards and official curricula. Teacher educators must also routinely navigate programmatic contexts that shape instruction by, for example, dictating the amount of time allotted for particular courses, setting priorities for the kinds of content novices will be exposed to, and delineating expectations for novices to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward professional preparation. Dealing with such constraints has been par for the course in teacher education work I've done in the past. What I found in this study, was that the particular ways in which these kinds of programmatic constraints manifested in this case directly interfered with the work I set out to do around cultivating novices' professional scripts.

Recall that common scripts for teaching refer to those scripts that produce patterns of practice that reflect the norms and values of the broader culture. Novices develop common scripts via their apprenticeships of observation and, consequently, begin formal teacher education with pre-existing ideas about what teaching practice is

or should be. Working with novices' common scripts for teaching would, then, seem to be a challenge for teacher education generally. However, for me in this mini-course in particular, a major concern that shaped the work I did with novices was that I felt I had to also work against an established set of norms and assumptions embedded within the program culture that reinforced novices' common scripts even as I was trying to do a very different kind of work with them. This concern interfered with my ability to form productive pedagogical relationships with novices, which limited in important ways the kinds of work I could do with them to develop their professional scripts for assigning competence.

**Toolbox orientation.** One way in which the program culture seemed to me to reinforce novices' common scripts had to do with what I came to refer to as the program's prevailing "toolbox orientation" to teaching. This grew from my observations that program staff and novices primarily talked about the work of teaching as if it comprised a series of discrete, relatively disconnected problems that teachers can solve by collecting and applying tools, or tricks of the trade, to fix issues as they arise. In this view of teaching, learning to do the work involves mastering a set of strategies and routines that can be deployed with little attention to the particulars of context. This toolbox orientation seemed intended to be helpful to novices by simplifying the complexity of the work of teaching so that they could manage the immediate problems of practice that cropped up in their classrooms between program sessions.

In this way, the toolbox orientation parallels an important feature of professional scripts for teaching: they both aim to help novices to deal with complexity by offering some structure to limit the universe of possible moves novices might make in practice to

a manageable set of options. The structure that each framework offers helps to scaffold novices' practice. However, the toolbox orientation scaffolds practice by limiting novices to the strategies, routines, and rules of thumb (i.e., the "tools") they've acquired; professional scripts for teaching, by contrast, set boundaries for novices' decision-making but do not dictate the moves that they make within those boundaries. In terms of the practice of assigning competence as I aimed to teach it in this course, a toolbox orientation would encompass having a stock set of sentence starters with which to name competence, while a professional script for the practice would encompass understanding when, how, and why to use particular sentence starters in response to particular kids demonstrating particular kinds of competence in particular ways. In both cases, novices' practice is structured in some way. The distinction is that the toolbox orientation demands only application of a one-size-fits-all "tool," while professional scripts for teaching demand judgment and responsiveness to students and context.

As I worked with novices and later analyzed my work with them, I identified two major issues with the toolbox orientation that not only interfered with, but in important ways directly challenged, the work I was trying to do with them around professional scripts for teaching.

*Interfering with work on practice.* One problem with the toolbox orientation as I encountered it in this program was that it reduced the complexity inherent in the work of teaching so much that it limited novices' opportunities to learn in and from practice. As I experienced the program's perspective, the work of teaching was treated as little more than the technocratic application of strategies and moves as if from a checklist; when

novices had a particular question or problem of practice, the solution was to add potential strategies and routines to the checklist.

I observed novices taking up this toolbox orientation when talking about their own and their colleagues' practice. For example, in our first problems of practice I asked novices to reflect on a time they'd tried something in their work with kids and been surprised by the outcome.<sup>31</sup> Frank shared a description of a recent read aloud he'd conducted in his class in which he'd been surprised to find that his students enjoyed being read to. I had framed the prompt in the way I had in order to provide a launch point for talking about what we know or think we know about kids and how we go about getting to know them better. However, when the other novices were given the opportunity to respond to Frank, they asked him questions like what book he read to students and how often they worked on reading fluency in his class. Details like these are, of course, relevant to what happened, but they are also superficial technical features of enactment that didn't help us understand very much about Frank's practice in this instance or what we could learn from it.

Whereas I had intended the prompt to help us move from a specific instance of practice to a more generalizable examination of the work of getting to know kids in our classrooms, the novices focused on details of Frank's enactment that would only really be useful if one intended to try to copy his read aloud wholesale in their own contexts—something that made no sense given the wide range of grade levels and content curricula the novices were responsible for. In this case, the toolbox orientation seemed

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<sup>31</sup> The exact prompt was: "Think about a time when you tried something (e.g., a new activity) out with a student or group of students, and you were surprised by the outcome—either because it succeeded or because it flopped. What did you know/think you knew about the student(s) that made you try what you tried? What did you learn about the student(s) as a result of the activity?"

to interfere with novices' ability to see past the surface features of Frank's enactment; it obscured and reduced the work of teaching that he'd engaged in to make his read aloud successful so that it appeared to be little more than a happy accident of successful strategy application. In other words, there was nothing much to learn from Frank's experience. He had used a tool from his toolbox (i.e., read aloud), and it had happened to work well that day, but the nature of the other novices' follow-up contributions prevented us from understanding *why* the read aloud might have been successful or how we might use it to dig further into the question of how teachers learn about kids across our work with them.

*Interfering with anti-racist work.* The second major problem I grappled with in relation to the toolbox orientation was the way in which it reflected and reinforced common scripts for teaching. In particular, my novices' apparent orientation toward reductive strategies, routines, and "quick fixes" upheld the kinds of legacy, racist systems and structures that I have argued throughout this dissertation that teacher education should work to disrupt. Indeed, the very idea of the "teacher's toolbox" can be critiqued on the grounds that it positions kids as problems to be "fixed," which suggests an inherently deficit framing. This happened because in the effort to identify and share quick fixes, novices didn't seem to have been given either the opportunity or the guidance necessary to so much as critically question the strategies and routines they were being taught to apply. An exchange I had with Robert during our second session illustrates what I mean by this.

Upon reflecting on how our first problems of practice discussion had gone, I decided to implement a much more structured discussion protocol for Session 2 to



scaffold novices' ability to start to think about and discuss practice in the way that I intended (see Figure 4.8). I did this because I believed that in order to start to learn anti-racist practice, novices needed a much more nuanced understanding of what practice is, generally, and how teachers engage in it. This was because novices talked about practice in the most general terms, treating it as "that which contrasts with theory" (Lampert, 2010, p. 23) rather than as a specific set of ideas, decisions, and moves they might make in response to kids and the context. The more general framing (i.e., "that which contrasts with theory") limits what can be learned in and from practice because it contributes to an image of teaching practice as artisanal and idiosyncratic (Lampert, 2010). To do the work that I hoped to do with them, I needed for novices to understand practice as a craft that can be dissected and learned in common with other practitioners.

Near the end of what I felt was a much more successful discussion of practice, Robert stepped out of the protocol to ask about techniques for using this same protocol with kids:

**Robert:** For the purpose of maintaining the flow and also ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to share slash are held accountable for participation, what do you do when folks say I don't know what to say, I don't have anything to say?

**Rebecca:** Well, that's why we stop and do the turn and talks.

**Robert:** Right, but even then?

**Rebecca:** Um, that's not an acceptable answer in my classroom. [laughs] (Session 2, 00:26:02)

Here, I struggled to respond effectively to Robert's question in-the-moment in large part because I understood it as him asking a toolbox-style question that was taking us away from the more substantive discussion of practice we'd been having. In particular, I

understood Robert to be asking something like, “How do I force kids to participate in my class?” and expecting a response along the lines of, “Rebecca’s top three tricks for wringing participation out of reluctant learners.” My first response was to offer him a strategy that we’d discussed in more depth earlier in class in the hopes of satisfying him so that we could get back on topic. When that didn’t work, I made a weak joke, again with the goal of ending the discussion quickly.

What I didn’t do that I could have—and should have—done was to surface the issues of equity and structural racism inherent in Robert’s question. What I read as his toolbox orientation desire for a quick fix to this problem of kids not participating in his class masks several assumptions about how classrooms “should” function and the teacher’s role with respect to students. For example, I could have asked him and the other novices to define what they mean by “participation.” I assumed that he meant a model of participation in which students are called on one-by-one by the teacher and are expected to speak out in front of the whole class. This discourse style, so common in classrooms as to be unremarkable, reflects dominant social norms related to turn-taking, manners, and acceptable academic interactions (Delpit, 1988, 2006; Gay, 2002; Mehan, 1980). It delegitimizes other discourse styles, such as overlapping talk, that are the norm among many non-dominant groups (Gay, 2002). It also ignores the socialized as well as personal preferences of kids who are uncomfortable addressing the group. These are worthy topics for exploration, especially in a course that is focused on the cultivation of anti-racist practice.

However, I was thrown by Robert’s question and caught up in trying to deflect what I read as his toolbox orientation and so offered a flip response designed to end the

exchange. In this instance, my frustration with what I saw as the programmatic emphasis on the toolbox orientation reflected here in Robert's question prevented me from helping Robert and the other novices view this issue from a more nuanced perspective on practice. Thus, my frustration with the toolbox orientation directly interfered with the work on anti-racist professional scripts for teaching that I aimed to do.

**Delegitimizing teacher education.** Another way in which these issues surfaced was through both explicit and implicit programmatic messaging to novices that devalued teacher education as a legitimate site of teacher learning. For instance, I heard program staff speak amongst themselves and with novices about how much more important and relevant novices' everyday teaching experiences were than what we did in our sessions together. This was also the explicit logic relayed to me when I was told I couldn't give novices between-class assignments. Teacher education work was characterized as taking away time and energy from more valuable school-based teaching experiences and professional development.

This programmatic orientation was also reflected in the ways in which my instructional time was consistently chipped away. Almost immediately after I first arranged to teach the mini-course, I lost an entire session due to the program's decision to insert a special topics session in place of what should have been my third class with novices (i.e., I had begun to plan for a six-session course and was then told I would have to pare it down to five). Further, I lost 20 to 30 minutes from Sessions 1 and 3 as a result of program meetings that were scheduled during those times. Additionally, I realized during my first session with the novices that they observed established norms around starting class up to 10 minutes after the listed start time and taking five- to 10-

minute breaks during class, neither of which had I known about prior to our first class together. By my estimates, across 10 hours of scheduled instructional time, I was only able to actually work with novices for eight to 8.5 hours. These repeated intrusions on our time together seemed to be unremarkable to novices or to the regular course instructor from whom I took over. To me, this pattern seemed to communicate that the program did not see coursework as particularly valuable because novices could learn what they needed to know about teaching by just being in classrooms. In the terminology that I've set out in this dissertation, the program seemed to be making an implicit argument that novices' common scripts for teaching were sufficient.

**The accountability game.** In the same vein, novices had a number of formal bureaucratic requirements they had to meet in order to remain in good standing with the program, such as a mandatory attendance policy and requirements for program-wide assignments that all novices were to complete every six weeks or so. However, I regularly observed novices negotiating with program staff to lessen or get out of those requirements altogether. I refer to this as “playing the accountability game.” For example, Kevin and Valerie missed every other session to participate in professional development activities at their schools. They had made an arrangement with program staff at the beginning of the year to still get attendance credit for those sessions because staff agreed that those professional development activities would be more useful to them than whatever they would miss during course sessions. In another incident, the regular course instructor stepped in to give Talia permission to forgo the Session 4 online assignments and still receive credit after Talia asked to skip them on the day they were due. From my vantage point, it seemed that the program placed more

emphasis on ensuring that novices fulfilled requirements on paper than on ensuring that they actually meet substantive markers of progress.

**Complicating work on professional scripts.** The program's apparent toolbox orientation to teaching, delegitimizing messages about the value of formal teacher education, and focus on the superficial appearance of accountability complicated my efforts to establish and maintain productive pedagogical relationships that could support my work to develop novices' professional scripts for the practice of assigning competence. My instructional approach often seemed to me to be in direct opposition to that which the novices had experienced and become comfortable with throughout their time in the program prior to my arrival. This made establishing my legitimacy and building trust and rapport with novices feel like a much heavier lift because not only did I have to grapple with the common scripts I assumed they had developed via their apprenticeships of observation, I also had to work in opposition to the messages they had been receiving from the program for months.<sup>32</sup>

### **Navigating Whiteness**

Whiteness—my own Whiteness, the Whiteness of the majority of my novices, and the Whiteness of teacher education as an intellectual space—posed special challenges to my efforts to establish productive professional relationships. In order to develop professional scripts for an anti-racist practice, I had to establish enough trust with novices that they would engage with me in work on race and racism, work that I anticipated they would be uncomfortable and inexperienced with. However, in building these relationships I also had to avoid falling into patterns of White comfort that could

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<sup>32</sup> These circumstances also directly affected my planning and instruction. I will address one example of this in the section on using approximations of practice later in this chapter.

undermine my instructional goals (Gadd, in progress). Here, I consider two instances in which my efforts to navigate Whiteness were particularly explicit, one that involved an interaction with the entire class and the other of which involved an interaction with a single student. I discuss what can be gleaned from these instances about the specific relational work of anti-racist teacher education.

**“I’m a White lady.”** Initially, my main concern when working with the class around race and racism was to establish my own legitimacy as someone the novices would see as capable of guiding them through this work. I was concerned that if I did not establish my legitimacy specifically with respect to issues of race and racism, then novices would either disengage from or actively resist the work I aimed to do with them. This kind of legitimacy is tied up in but distinct from my efforts to establish myself as a teacher educator more generally. With respect to the relational work necessary to establish myself as a legitimate teacher educator, I had a set of moves that I have cultivated over years of experience and that I had been deploying since I met the novices during my first pre-teaching observation of their class. For example, in my experience, especially in alternative certification settings, novices care a lot about whether or not their instructors have classroom teaching experience. So, when I introduced myself to the novices at the first observation and again at the beginning of the first session of the mini-course, I emphasized that I had been a middle school teacher in urban schools that served racially and socioeconomically diverse groups of students. I have also found that novices tend to read me as younger than I am,<sup>33</sup> which for many of them may undermine my credibility, so I also emphasized that I have been a

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<sup>33</sup> Thanks to the passage of time and the wages of writing this dissertation, this has become much less of an issue.

teacher and teacher educator for more than ten years. Further, I make it a practice to appeal to my experiences as a classroom teacher during teacher education instruction by sharing relevant anecdotes or by linking my own experiences with those that novices share in class.

My efforts to establish my legitimacy as someone who could guide novices through work on race and racism were more complicated. One place during the mini-course that illustrates this relational work was around my efforts to plan and enact the Session 3 activities that focused on generating a group definition of racism, using it to develop a critical analytic lens, and then applying that lens to multiple instances of classroom teaching. As I planned these activities with Shoshana and then carried them out with the novices, I had to navigate the multiple identities and assumptions I believed were at play in the space in order to position myself as someone novices could trust enough to engage in these activities together.

In the first place, I had to consider who my novices were. Although I did not collect any formal demographic data on them, as a teacher educator I made efforts to get to know what I could about them through discussions with them, discussions with their regular course instructor, and my own observations. Novices were in an alternative certification program in a major metropolitan area. This told me that they were a few years older, at least, than undergraduates in the traditional preservice program I had most recently taught in prior to this mini-course. This also told me that they were likely working in under-resourced schools under very stressful conditions. This assumption was borne out when they shared stories of their days, like the time that Zara had to intervene when a substitute teacher in her building tried to choke a child, or Frank's

experience of being required to move in lockstep with a heavily scripted curriculum that he was not allowed to alter even though it seemed nonresponsive to his students' needs.

This group of novices were also more diverse than other groups I had taught in the recent past. Of twelve novices on the roster, five either identified themselves or appeared to be people of color; the other seven appeared to be White. Further, the majority of novices, both people of color and White, made moves to signal their awareness of race and racism. For example, during one of my pre-teaching observations, Robert, a White-presenting man, engaged me in a lengthy conversation about his perceptions of how genuine his teacher education program's commitments to racial equity really were; Valerie referred to herself as "a socially woke black educator" in one of her Session 4 responses; Felicia, Zach, Leah, and Valerie identified the ways in which content presented in a video of teaching practice reflected White-dominant values and cultural norms. At the same time, one or two novices rarely said anything about race or racism, which I read as a lack of familiarity or a discomfort with the topic. As I worked with Shoshana to plan our Session 3 activities in which we would generate a working definition of racism and then develop a critical lens for analyzing practice, I told her:

**Rebecca:** And so it's like there's this one woman in particular who, the very first time that I visited the class, she came in and at the beginning they were, you know, chatting before everything got started, and she said to somebody else, "You know I really felt my Blackness today." So there's that contrasted with a couple of the others who I would be surprised if they saw themselves as raced beings. (Shoshana meeting 03/15/17)

During that planning session, we also discussed the ways in which the academic cultural space could shape my work with novices. As discussed at the outset of this



section, teacher education as an intellectual space is dominated by Whiteness. One way this shows up in practice is White-dominant values and assumptions are used to control the discourse and deflect engagement with race and racism by treating them as intellectual abstractions that do not bear on “real life” (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014; Gadd, in progress; Haviland, 2008). Shoshana underscored this danger:

**Shoshana:** And it just seems like sometimes here in the academy and all over the place in the academy people can talk about these things and analyze them in a way that distances and renders it just like it's this, you know, scholarly exercise. And that, I think, does real—like tremendous damage. (Shoshana meeting, 03/15/17)

She went on to elaborate that the damage in part lies in abstraction giving cover to White students to disengage from their responsibility to understand and work against racism because they either do not see their own experiences of inequities being honored or fail to see the real impacts of inequities on people who are not like them. For students of color, this kind of abstraction does damage because they see their lived experiences treated as fodder for intellectual debate but not as real-world problems that affect real people like them. Finally, as an instructor, I had seen firsthand how abstraction could be used, even unintentionally, to avoid having to engage groups of novices in uncomfortable discourse (Gadd, in progress).

Finally, I had to consider my own identities and the ways in which novices might read me that could undermine their sense of my legitimacy. First, I am a White woman. All of the reasons I cited as possibilities for why it could be difficult for me to engage novices with the topics of race and racism (e.g., White fragility) were also potential issues they might anticipate from me. Additionally, although under even the best social circumstances my Whiteness could cause novices to be wary of me with respect to this

topic, this class took place in the immediate aftermath of the Trump election and inauguration, in a cultural context in which we were already seeing a sharp uptick in hate crimes (Hatewatch Staff, 2016, 2017) and there was open talk about White nationalist forces taking positions of power within the new administration (Nguyen, 2016). It would not have been unreasonable for novices, especially novices of color and those White novices who positioned themselves as critically conscious, to harbor heightened doubts about someone who looks like me coming to them and saying, “We’re going to work on racism in teaching.”

On top of this, I had to begin this work with novices without having established a solid working relationship with them. Prior to this session, I had only met with them twice as their instructor, and those two meetings had been spread out over six weeks due to the program schedule. The primary thing that the novices knew about me was that I was a doctoral researcher from an elite institution who was teaching their class for my dissertation. I did not believe that the relational work I had done to that point to establish myself as an experienced teacher and teacher educator gave me very much leverage with them. I worried that they still primarily saw me as an academic, disconnected from the realities of race and racism as they play out in everyday classroom practice.

Each of these sets of considerations—my perceptions of novices’ identities, the Whiteness of the intellectual space, and my own identities and how they might be read—separately and in conversation with one another, bore on my planning and enactment of this session. During planning, I carefully considered how to structure each activity and how to sequence them to establish my own legitimacy and begin to build trust. So, for example, I took Shoshana’s suggestion to begin the sequence with the

definition activity as a way of, on the one hand, generating a communal reference point for our later work and, on the other hand, centering our discussions on the systemic nature of racism. In this way, I aimed to pre-empt White fragility to some extent by reframing racism as a social structure rather than an individual moral failing. Similarly, we would move to a critique of another teacher's practice during the second activity in part to give them practice with talking about racism in a way that was not about any of them personally.

As I transitioned them into this activity sequence from that evening's problems of practice discussion, I also stopped to intentionally try to position myself as legitimate by modeling critical self-reflection for them. I told novices:

**Rebecca:** I will acknowledge up front: I'm a White lady, and, like, you don't know me from nowhere. So, you have no reason to believe that I have any capacity to talk about these things, right? Or to get you to talk about these things. And I acknowledge that. Hopefully, I will confound expectations, but I acknowledge that is out there. (Session 3, 00:27:21)

I then worked to acknowledge their experiences and the potentially problematic features of the intellectual space by sharing with them what Shoshana and I had discussed about the potential pain and risk involved for novices in this kind of work. I gave them a few moments to independently reflect on any anxiety or hesitation they might feel as we prepared to begin. In making these moves, my intention was to acknowledge the reality that our identities play into how we experience racism and to disrupt instructional patterns that abstract and therefore obscure racism in academic spaces. Throughout the session, I was careful about the extent to which I inserted myself into small group discussions and whole group debriefs, opting to avoid circulating during small group work and to primarily act as a recorder during the debriefs. I made these moves in order

to avoid either putting extra pressure on novices or presenting myself as some kind of know-it-all. My sense, based on what I had considered about novices' identities, my own identities, and the politics of the space, was that demonstrating genuine concern for their experiences in combination with humility about myself and my role would most help me to establish my legitimacy and navigate Whiteness with the group that evening, which would set up future anti-racist work together.

**“A lot of wink-wink.”** In addition to establishing my legitimacy, I also had to navigate the ways in which Whiteness complicated my relationships with individual novices, particularly White novices. As I found in my pilot study, there are strong social pressures to offer White comfort to White novices in anticipation of or in response to their discomfort when confronted with issues of race and racism (Gadd, in progress). As a fellow White person, I am also subject to tacit expectations of racial solidarity, wherein the social norm dictates that I align myself with other Whites in race-related matters, regardless of whether or not I agree with their position. In my pilot study for this mini-course, I had observed myself offer novices<sup>34</sup> White comfort and White solidarity (Leonardo, 2002; Sleeter, 1996), despite the fact that I explicitly set out not to do so; and I had seen how those kinds of social moves undermined my efforts to teach that previous group of novices professional scripts for anti-racist practice. I was wary of repeating the same pattern when I taught the mini-course for this study. At the same time, a productive pedagogical relationship hinges on students' willingness and ability to continue engaging with the teacher. If I offered White comfort to White novices, I ran the risk of damaging my relationship with novices of color, who might see me as someone

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<sup>34</sup> In that study, all but one of my novices were White.

who cared more about White people's feelings than real anti-racist work; conversely, if I provoked White novices' sense of White fragility, they might shut down and disengage from instruction altogether. Striking the right balance in my approach was neither an easy nor a straightforward task. Here I describe an incident in the last class session of the mini-course in which my interaction with a White student, Felicia, best illustrates the complexities of trying to navigate Whiteness to form a productive pedagogical relationship with novices.

The incident occurred while novices were engaged in the case study activity and had been working in small groups for several minutes to read through the case materials and begin their analyses. The intent of this activity was to give novices some practice with analyzing a realistic classroom situation and planning for future anti-racist instruction. At the outset of the activity, I sat with the small group that did not include Felicia, so I missed the beginning of her group's exchange. However, when I joined them a few minutes into the activity, I gathered that they had been debating the value of what they referred to as "teaching-as-telling versus teaching-as-inquiry." Felicia had taken the stance that inquiry is *always* preferable to telling because White teachers, like her, did not have the right to impose meaning on non-White students. She gave as an example her class's recent discussion of the play *A Raisin in the Sun*. She said that as a White teacher of mostly Black children, it was not her place to tell them what to make of the characters' experiences of race and racism in America. Another group member, Valerie, made the counter-argument that students need the skills of inquiry in order to learn from inquiry and that sometimes teaching them these skills might entail teaching-as-telling. Valerie, a self-identified "socially woke Black educator" and friend of Felicia,

argued that using inquiry for everything was often unproductive and that if students needed to know a particular skill or piece of information the teacher should sometimes just tell them.

My initial contribution to this discussion was to point novices to Lisa Delpit's (2006) work on the culture of power as a possible resource for thinking about their question. However, Felicia seemed to read my contribution as a sign that I was taking sides against her and possibly calling her a racist, and she began to visibly shut down. She put her head in her hands and would not look at anyone other than Valerie. She also told me that she imagined that what she meant by "inquiry" was probably quite different from my "more traditional" understanding. It seemed to me that she believed I had violated her expectations of me as a fellow White person. I stayed with the group for a moment or two more, during which time Valerie made several attempts to appeal to her friendship with Felicia to position Felicia as culturally competent without backing off of her own (Valerie's) original point. I affirmed several of Valerie's points in an effort to simultaneously position her as competent and coax Felicia out of her defensive posture.

Felicia continued to seem quite frustrated with me, so I decided it best to move away to give the group the intellectual and affective space I thought they needed to proceed. But less than a minute later, Felicia gathered up her things and left class. She left in such a hurry that she forgot her phone, so I picked it up to take out to her. I thought I might use that as an excuse to try to talk her back into class, but when I found her in the hallway I simply gave her the phone, and she walked away. The following is from my field notes that night:

My initial impulse was to follow her out and try to talk her down, but I didn't because (a) I feel like I barely have a relationship with her, and I thought it might make things more weird and awkward; and (b) I didn't know what I'd say that wouldn't serve to validate her freak out in a White solidarity kind of way. Like, I believe there can be ways to handle a situation like that productively, but I didn't know what to do in that moment so I let her go ... I'd like to try to follow up with her via email, but I need to do some more thinking about what I'd say. (Session 5, post-class reflection)

When I described this episode to Shoshana the following week, I reflected on the way in which my and Felicia's shared Whiteness seemed to have shaped this interaction:

**Rebecca:** I was thinking about it specifically in the sense of like: I am a White woman—she's interacting with me as White woman to White woman. And I was thinking about how might this be different if I were a Black woman, or if I were Brown.

**Shoshana:** Yeah, you're identities were very much ...

**Rebecca:** So it's like how is what I'm getting from her expected based on the perceived identity affinity?

**Shoshana:** A lot of wink-wink going on. (Shoshana meeting, 04/25/17)

In this instance, my first attempt to engage in relational work with Valerie and Felicia's group by offering relevant resources was ineffective. This effort seemed to be taken by Felicia as an indication that I was against her, which appeared to then trigger a defensive response which I read as reflective of White fragility. Even as I tried to figure out how to draw Felicia back into the discussion, I was cognizant of Valerie's position as the only Black woman in the group. However, my moves to position Valerie as competent by affirming her contributions could have been read by Felicia as further "evidence" that I was not on her (Felicia's) side. My later move—or non-move, rather—of letting Felicia leave was unsatisfying to me as an educator but, I believed, the best option in that moment. I was unprepared to manage how my identity as a White woman

might intersect with Felicia's identity as a White woman, and I was worried that this might lead me to reinforce what I saw as her problematic behavior. I chose to do nothing rather than communicate a message that might undermine my efforts to support the development of a professional script for anti-racist practice.

### **Using Professional Scripts to Teach Professional Practice**

While my framing of the professional script for the practice of assigning competence shaped my work to build pedagogical relationships with novices, the pedagogical relationships I built underlay my efforts to use professional scripts to teach the practice. In this section, I more closely examine what was involved in that work. I first consider the ways in which I worked to establish the professional ethics that bound the professional script and to help novices connect those professional ethics to enactment. Then, I discuss my efforts to develop a useful decomposition of the practice that would inform my instruction and support novices' learning. I end with an examination of what was involved in designing and enacting meaningful approximations of the practice that I hoped would support novices' development of a professional script for the anti-racist practice of assigning competence.

### **Connecting the Practice to Professional Ethics**

In chapter 2, I defined professional scripts for teaching as those scripts that underlie patterns of practice that reflect the professional ethic of providing equitable opportunities to learn ambitious content to all students in ways that will enable them to engage critically and consciously within and across groups as members of a diverse democracy (Figure 5.1).



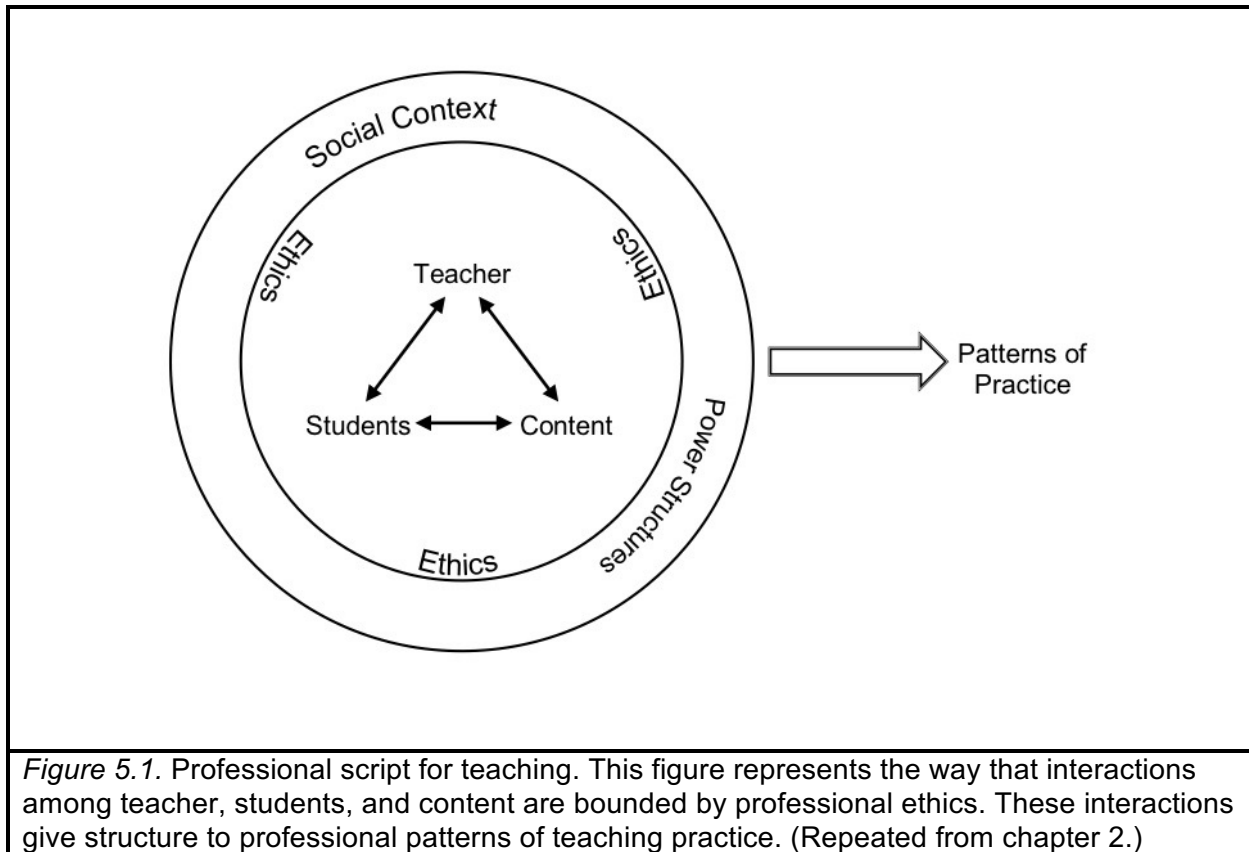


Figure 5.1. Professional script for teaching. This figure represents the way that interactions among teacher, students, and content are bounded by professional ethics. These interactions give structure to professional patterns of teaching practice. (Repeated from chapter 2.)

Recall that professional ethics bound professional practice by limiting what can be considered acceptable variations in patterns of practice. Thus, at the outset of my work on the mini-course, I believed that in order to support novices to develop a professional script for a given practice, teacher educators must identify both the desired patterns of anti-racist practice toward which novices will work and their relationships with the particular professional ethics that bound those patterns of practice. In the case of the practice of assigning competence, this might involve teacher educators identifying a series of technical moves for assigning competence, as well as unpacking both the requirement to disrupt established classroom social hierarchies and the idea of equitable opportunities to learn. Although talking *about* ethics and technical moves has the potential to impact novices' beliefs about the practice, as a teacher educator I

questioned whether or not it would actually impact novices' ability to enact the practice in a way that reflected the underlying professional script.

Thus, I sought to explicitly surface for novices the relationships between the professional ethics that informed the practice and the enactment of the practice. For instance, I wrote the first two logical premises of the mini-course in the course overview distributed to novices during our first session (Appendix A) to highlight the interplay of professional ethics and anti-racist practice. These logical premises read, in part:

- (1) Inequity (e.g., racism) is built into the educational system, and teachers have a professional ethical obligation to work against it**  
... It is our ethical obligation as professional educators to work against structural inequity in whatever ways we can. One way of doing this that we will explore in this mini-course is to learn how to intentionally and productively disrupt existing classroom social hierarchies in order to redefine who is “smart” and “successful” in our classes.
- (2) Teachers have agency to act in their classrooms, and every act they engage in in their classrooms is an ethical choice.** We have an enormous amount of power within the confines of our classrooms, regardless of the constraints imposed on us by external forces ... Our kids take their cues from us about things like what they should expect of themselves, of each other, and of their teachers; how seriously they should treat their own learning; whether our classes are worth their time; etc. Everything we do in our classrooms has the potential to either expand or limit their prospects. (Course overview, p. 1)

In these two statements, which I also read aloud and explicated to novices during our first session together, I name a primary professional ethic of the practice of assigning competence (i.e., working against structural inequity in classrooms), highlight teachers' responsibility and ability to enact that ethic (i.e., “It is our ethical obligation ...” in premise 1; “Teachers have agency to act ...” in premise 2), and signal one way in which teachers might carry out this obligation (i.e., by disrupting existing hierarchies to redefine who is considered smart or successful). These logical premises were intended

to center anti-racist work from the outset of the mini-course and setting novices' expectations for the work we would do together.

I also intended for the reading and conver-stations activity in Session 1, in which novices were first formally introduced to a definition and representation of the practice of assigning competence, to surface connections between professional ethics and enactment of the practice. In the passage that novices read (Featherstone, et al., 2011, pp. 87-92), the authors provide several rationales for the practice that are congruent with the ethical obligation I named for novices in the first logical premise. These include helping students with high social status appreciate their classmates with lower status, helping students with lower status see themselves as intelligent, repositioning students within the classroom social structure, expanding students' view of what the content is,<sup>35</sup> reframing the teacher's view of students (e.g., from "unmotivated" to "systematically excluded by peers"—see Featherstone, et al., p. 90), and equalizing students' social status in the classroom. Although the unexpected time constraints that cropped up during the first session meant I had to forgo my planned concluding whole group synthesis of novices' understanding of the practice, at least one novice retained a definition of assigning competence that reflected the associated professional ethics. At the beginning of our second session, Zach offered the following definition of the practice as a reminder for the group: "Trying to reconstruct hierarchies that already exist in your classroom by using calculated strategies based on what you've seen and what you've learned" (Session 2, 00:30:44). While neither the passage nor the definition that Zach

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<sup>35</sup> As discussed in chapter 2, restrictive definitions of content knowledge oppress students who belong to social groups whose knowledge is considered less worthy or unworthy of knowing and learning.

offered reflect anti-racism, both of their emphases on disrupting established social hierarchies are moving in the right direction.

These efforts were still at the level of talking *about* the relationship between professional ethics and enactment. An important additional aspect of the work of connecting ethics to enactment was to build in opportunities for novices to *practice enactment* that was directly and explicitly informed by anti-racist ethical obligations. This is because individuals develop scripts through repeated experiences with them (Schank & Abelson, 1977; Tomkins, 1978). Thus, to help novices develop professional scripts for a practice, teacher educators need to engage them in experiences that allow them to practice and gain experience with those scripts.

This was especially important in a case like mine in which the professional ethics that novices needed to learn to enact were very different from and, in many ways, opposed to tacit common values around teaching and schooling that they were likely to hold as a result of their apprenticeships of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002). Furthermore, the toolbox orientation that the program seemed to endorse reflected an entrenched common script that novices brought with them to the work I wished to do with them in this mini-course. Thus, my work entailed facilitating some degree of what Shoshana referred to as “unlearning” (Shoshana meeting, 04/25/17), a process that necessitated active practice. By planning to offer them opportunities to connect anti-racist motivations with enactment under conditions that approximated practice, I aimed to help novices begin to understand what the patterns of practice that reflect assigning competence look like and where the boundaries of variation in professional enactment lie.

**Looking at student work.** I attempted to design a series of approximations of practice that I wove in throughout the mini-course to engage novices in practicing different elements of assigning competence. These included the to-do items assigned at the end of each class session, looking closely at student work during Session 2, the MAT assignment for Session 4, and the case study activity in Session 5. I will discuss my findings regarding the work of designing approximations in greater detail below. Here, I describe planning and enacting the student work activity to examine how I attempted to connect the motivations of assigning competence to enactment through practicing the practice.

When I met with Shoshana after the first class session, I told her that I had noticed novices using “high, medium, low language” to talk about kids. For example, Kevin told us that he had expected his “low students” to struggle with a particular activity because they lacked the literacy and the computer skills he believed they needed for the activity (Session 1 transcript, 00:17:10). I told Shoshana that I hadn’t said anything directly about novices’ use of this kind of essentializing language because my strategy had been to be “high-energy, low-pressure” in the first class to try to establish rapport but that I couldn’t leave it past our next class if I was to do the work I hoped to do with them on assigning competence. Because we had started with the aspects of the practice that have to do with learning about students in different ways, I told Shoshana that, “I’m trying to think about how can I set it up because I want to highlight the ways in which this idea of engagement and ‘high, medium, and low’ are constructed” (Shoshana, meeting, 02/14/17). The point of all of this was to surface for novices the

ways in which their ideas about kids contributed to the social hierarchies that we would be trying to disrupt with the practice of assigning competence.

In order to make this connection in practice, I devised the student work activity for Session 2 in which novices worked in groups to analyze a piece of student writing to determine what they could learn about the child who had produced it. During the second half of the activity, we would explore the “dilemma of knowing” to consider how, as teachers, they might anticipate and try to navigate the issues that arise when teachers use what they know about kids to construct identities for them. Both parts of this activity—learning about kids through their academic work and navigating the dilemma of knowing—reflect actual work that teachers do that contribute to the practice of assigning competence. They also enable novices to begin to work through the implications for enactment of the motivation of the practice. In this instance, the activity explicitly surfaced the ways in which teachers construct students’ identities and engaged novices in practicing using information about a kid to consider how they might reconstruct that student’s identity in their classrooms.

At the same time, however, this activity failed to explicitly connect *anti-racist* motivations to enactment. Nothing in the student description or the discussion I facilitated around either part of the activity addressed the how race might play into the work of getting to know kids and managing the dilemma of knowing. I did not, for instance, help novices to recognize the ways in which “high, medium, and low” language can encapsulate highly racialized expectations for behavior and academic performance. The difficulty of this teacher education work is that it is easy to recognize the missed opportunity to connect anti-racist motives to enactment in retrospect, but in

the moment in enactment with novices the more general point about deficit versus asset framings seemed adequate.

The kind of work I engaged in in these examples is key to teacher education that is aimed at cultivating novices' professional scripts for practice because it offers an entry point to new patterns of practice that reflect professional ethics. My goal was to help novices begin to develop expectations for what assigning competence might entail and where the boundaries of the practice are. However, in this activity I did not make the connection between *anti-racist* professional ethics and the practice of assigning competence explicit. Instead, I designed and enacted an activity that helped novices to connect the more general motivation of disrupting inequity in classrooms to the teacher's ongoing work of learning about kids and using that information strategically. This was a useful starting point, but to cultivate novices' professional scripts for anti-racist practice, I would have had to have helped novices more closely attend to the role of race and racialized expectations in their reading of this kid's work. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in chapter 6.

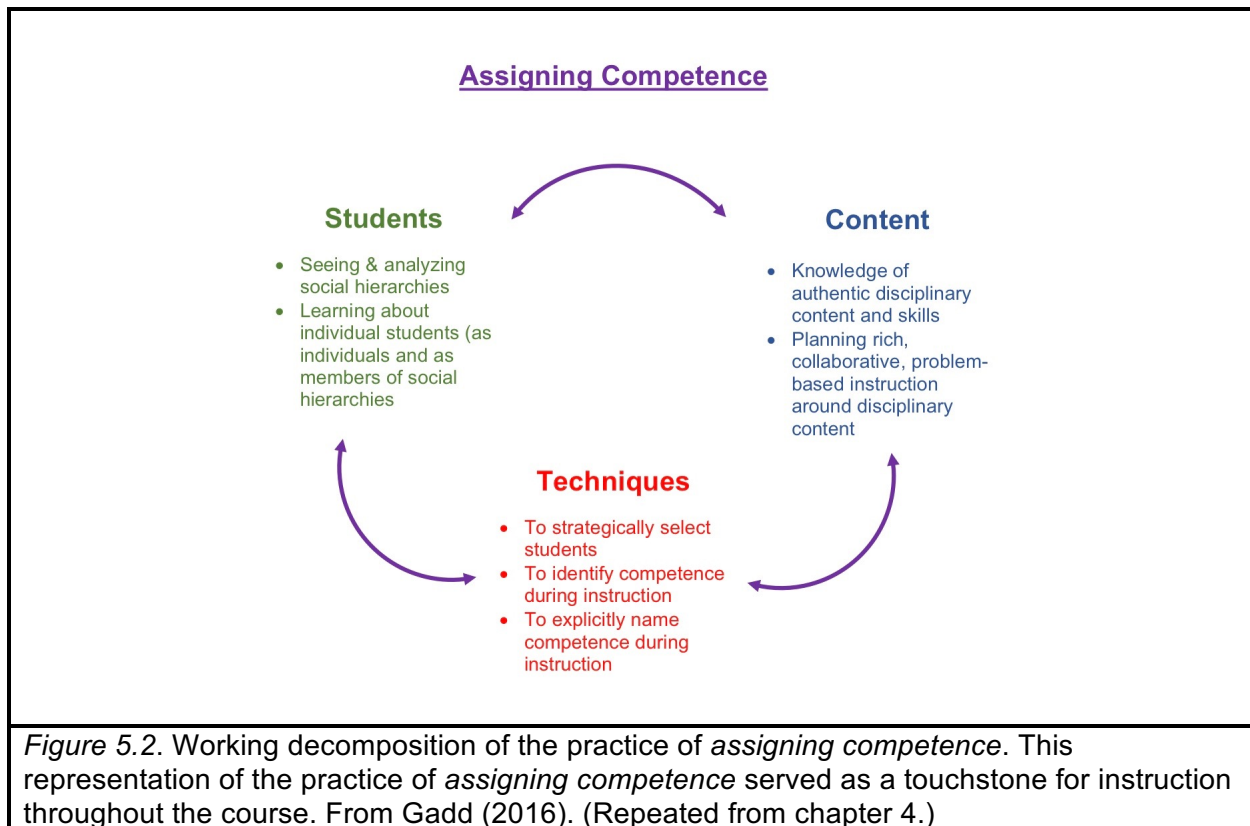
### **Developing a Useful Decomposition**

Grossman et al. (2009) identify decomposition as a key technique or tool for professional educators who aim to teach practice to novices. Decomposition involves "breaking down complex practice into its constituent parts for the purposes of teaching and learning" so that novices might "see' and enact elements of practice effectively" (p. 2069). That decomposition should be integral to the learning of practice is an intuitive finding because most learning of any complex activity involves mastering smaller "pieces" of knowledge or skill that will "add up" to the whole. Intentionally employing the

concept of decomposition of practice compels practice-based educators to systematically consider how the practice or practices to be learned might be most effectively broken apart and presented to novices. This is not a straightforward task. It is relatively easy to break apart practices into the series of steps, techniques, or moves that comprise the whole; but this kind of approach produces technocratic understandings of practice in which novices can “do the steps” but cannot necessarily “do the practice.” Reducing practice to checklists in this way reflects a toolbox orientation to the work of teaching that elides the complexity and situatedness of authentic enactment and reinforces problematic common scripts for teaching. Thus, one core part of the work of decomposing practice for the purposes of teaching a professional script is to identify the constituent elements of practice in a way that preserves the complexity of recomposition in enactment. In other words, teacher educators must help novices “see” the elements of a given practice as well as how those elements fit back together into the whole during enactment.

My approach to capturing the complexity of assigning competence in a decomposition focused on identifying the “areas of work” necessary for the practice (Figure 5.2).





I generated this decomposition of the practice based on my understanding of the literature on the theoretical and experimental underpinnings of assigning competence and the literature on efforts to implement the practice in classrooms; I also considered what I had learned from my own prior efforts to teach this practice to novice teachers. The work of the practice that I believed novices needed to learn in order to learn to enact the practice involved getting to know students as individuals and members of social systems, planning content instruction that broadens students' ideas about what "counts" as smart in that content, and deploying pedagogical techniques or moves to position students with respect to content in ways that intentionally disrupt established social hierarchies. The arrows in the diagram are meant to indicate that each of these three areas of work interacts reciprocally with the others in the enactment of the

practice. I used this decomposition in two ways throughout the mini-course, as a tool for novices and as a tool for myself as teacher educator.

**A tool for novices.** I shared the diagram in Figure 16 with novices during Session 2 as another representation of the practice that they could refer to. I then used the three areas of work of the practice as guides to focus their attention and efforts during activities we completed across Sessions 3, 4, and 5. For example, the three areas of practice became a key component of the critical lens we developed for analyzing our own and others' teaching practice. After generating a working group definition of racism in Session 3, I engaged novices in multiple opportunities to apply that definition to instances of teaching practice by identifying where features of our definition showed up with respect to work with students, work with content, or the particular pedagogical techniques used.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, for their to-do items in Sessions 3 and 4, I directed novices to select one of the areas of work of the practice of assigning competence (i.e., students, content, techniques) and then try one move to disrupt inequity with respect to that area of work in their own practice. My goal in devising these to-do items was to help novices see and practice one element of the focal practice in a way that tied directly to the motivation of the practice. However, novices' responses to these to-do items indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of how the decompositions they engaged in related to the practice of assigning competence as a whole. For example, in her written response to the Session 3 to-do item (Session 4, Assignment 1), Valerie suggested that

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<sup>36</sup> See chapter 4, Sessions 3, 4, and 5 for descriptions of these activities.

she did not see the importance of breaking practice down in the way the assignments dictated:

It is really hard for me to isolate one example of an “anti-racist” practice and maybe I am just sensitive to the topic, but it is difficult for me to pick out any one approach that I would consider a direct response to acts of racism. (Valerie, Session 4, Assignment 1)

She reiterated this point during the gallery walk at the beginning of Session 5.<sup>37</sup>

When I initially read Valerie’s Session 4 response, I was unsure of how to make sense of it. I shared it with Shoshana, and we debated several possible interpretations including that Valerie really did believe that her practice was already disruptive of racist norms and systems, that she was avoiding critical reflection because she didn’t want to risk her view of herself as “a ‘socially woke’ black educator” (Valerie, Session 4, Assignment 1), or that she didn’t take me and/or the assignment seriously. However, after she elaborated on her thinking during our gallery walk discussion in Session 5, I realized that I had overlooked another likely interpretation: that Valerie was unconvinced that breaking the practice down in the way that I had directed with the assignments was useful given that actual anti-racist teaching as she understood it was much more holistic and situated in the particular contextual factors of one’s classroom and school.

Leah, Zara, and Whitney also demonstrated a disconnect between the practice and the decomposition of the practice, but, rather than seeing the decomposition as a diminishment of practice as Valerie did, they seemed to understand the decomposition as synonymous with the practice. During the first part of our gallery walk discussion in Session 5, Zara highlighted Leah’s contribution in which she wrote about sending a disruptive student to stand outside the classroom rather than referring him to the office

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<sup>37</sup> Due to the failure of my recording devices I do not have her actual statement to share here.

as she had in the past. Whitney shared a similar system that she had devised for handling students who acted out in class. Zara related Leah's and Whitney's contributions to her own efforts to change how she handled disciplinary issues in her classroom so that kids could stay in the room when they misbehaved rather than being sent to the dean. Zara described the classroom "liberation station" she had designed so that students who were struggling could have a place in the room to collect themselves and reflect:

**Zara:** I think some people just like need a chance to like break free from like the current situation, but I don't want to isolate them because I feel like isolation like outside of classroom isn't like okay either because that's like that school-to-prison pipeline thing. (Session 5, 00:21:17)

Her motives here are clearly tied to the professional ethics of the practice related to disrupting racist structures in schooling. She, Leah, and Whitney were all clearly working to reposition kids more positively in their classrooms, which is core to the work of assigning competence. However, the professional script for the practice of assigning competence also entails doing this positive positioning work with respect to some content so that students' ideas of what counts as smart and who is smart are expanded. Neither Zara, Leah, nor Whitney indicated how their efforts might link to those other areas of their work with students. They discussed their efforts with respect to the decomposition as if the decomposition itself were the practice.

Although Valerie, Zara, Leah, and Whitney demonstrated different kinds of disconnect between the decomposition of the practice as I presented it to them and the professional script for the practice itself, the nature of the disconnects seem similar. Namely, something was happening in the way that I presented the decomposition of the practice that made it difficult for these novices to see how the smaller "pieces" of the

script in which I attempted to engage them related to the work of the practice as a whole. This same kind of disconnect emerged in my own work to use the decomposition as a tool to support my efforts to teach the practice.

**A tool for teacher educators.** The diagram in Figure 16 also served as a tool for my efforts as the teacher educator to design opportunities for novices to engage with aspects of the practice. This is distinct from the ways in which Grossman et al. (2009) discuss using decompositions in professional education. Their discussion of how decompositions show up in professional education focuses on novices' interactions with decompositions (e.g., engaging with a single facet of a more complex practice). What I found in my efforts to devise and use a decomposition of the practice of assigning competence for the purpose of teaching a professional script is that the decomposition one relies on can inform and constrain one's teacher education practice.

For instance, my efforts to parse the practice of assigning competence for the purposes of devising the decomposition forced me to consider what about the professional script for the practice is most important to highlight for novices—these became the three areas of work captured in the decomposition. I then used this as a design tool to lay out the general structure of the mini-course. In our first planning meeting, I told Shoshana that I intended to focus our first two sessions on getting to know students and thinking carefully together about how our knowledge of students informs the practice; the third and fourth sessions would emphasize flexible content knowledge and classroom design because “when you're thinking about content with assigning competence, you gotta think deeply about like what is even the content, but also flexibly about what counts as smart” (Shoshana meeting, 01/31/17); and the final

session would be about reorganizing the learning environment and actually enacting the practice.

However, I struggled to help novices understand how the parts of assigning competence fit together into a coherent, enactable whole. As described above, Valerie, Zara, Leah, and Whitney—a group who represented half of the novices who actually completed the Session 3 and 4 to-do items—seemed unclear on how the decompositions I engaged them in related to the practice as a whole. The final case study activity, which I will discuss further in the next section on approximations of practice, was unlikely to help them make this connection as it focused mainly on *planning for* rather than *enacting* the practice. When I look at the decomposition now, at a remove of almost a year since I finished teaching the class, I myself am uncertain what it communicates about the relationship between the parts of the practice and enactment. Although work on content and work with students are shown to interact reciprocally with one another, for example, what does this actually mean for teaching novices how to enact the practice? My work to teach the professional script for the practice across the mini-course directly reflects the decomposition of the practice that I had devised, but the decomposition does not adequately reflect the work of the practice for the purposes of teaching and learning.

### **Designing Meaningful Approximations**

Creating opportunities for novices to engage in approximations of the practice to be learned is linked both to work to connect the focal practice to its motivations and work to decompose the practice for teaching and learning. Approximations of practice offer novices the chance to engage in a practice or part of a practice in ways that focus

their attention on key features of the practice to be learned and that reduce the complexity of authentic enactment to a manageable level (Grossman, et al., 2009). The idea is that by engaging in approximations, novices have the chance to practice some part of a given practice under controlled conditions so that they can gain facility before having to use the practice in real world situations.

From the perspective of teacher education aimed at developing novices' professional scripts for practice, incorporating approximations are an absolute necessity. This is because if novices are to learn new ethics and patterns of practice that go against their well-established common scripts for teaching, then they need opportunities to practice and gain experience with enacting those new patterns under conditions in which they can receive feedback and guidance. Without opportunities to practice these new ethics and forms, novices are likely to revert to more familiar forms of practice as they try to get by in their first years of teaching (Dewey, 1904/1965; Lortie, 1975/2002). So, it is imperative that teacher educators carefully consider what opportunities for approximation they will offer to novices to help them gain experience with enacting professional scripts.

I attempted to include a number of approximations of the practice throughout my mini-course to support novice learning. Two of these activities, looking at student work in Session 2 (discussed above) and the assignment to create a multiple abilities treatment in Session 4 (Session 4, Assignment 3) were somewhat successful as approximations. The other two activities that I planned, called, and thought of as approximations while teaching the mini-course were the to-do items assigned at the end of each class session and the case study activity we undertook in the final session.

However, neither of these activities were successful as approximations for the purposes I intended. Two features of these approximations that seemed especially salient to their relative success as approximations and as learning opportunities for novices were the extent to which they allowed for novice learning to be mediated and each activity's relative proximity to real enactment of the practice. I will discuss each of these in turn below.

**Mediated opportunities for learning.** For an approximation to be an approximation it needs to be *like* authentic enactment but not the real thing (Grossman, et al., 2009). By constraining the level of authenticity of the approximation, teacher educators can focus novices' attention on the most salient features of the professional script for the practice to be learned. In other words, by constraining the level of authenticity of the approximation, teacher educators can mediate novices' learning in potentially productive ways. With respect to the student work activity in Session 2, I constrained the level of authenticity in a handful of important ways. First, I selected the student work sample that novices would use, as opposed to having them produce one from their own classrooms. I did this because I wanted to focus their attention on the work of getting to know kids with respect to content—that is, getting to know kids through their interactions with content. Understanding who kids are in relation to the content we teach is core to the work of assigning competence because it provides necessary context for efforts to reposition them and disrupt the status quo, and I thought that if I had them bring in a work sample from their own classrooms they would have too many pre-existing ideas about the child who had produced it. Second, I had novices work in groups to accomplish the task, despite the fact that teachers generally examine



student work on their own in actual practice. In part, this had to do with practicality: it was easier for me to support the learning of three groups than it would have been to oversee nine individuals. More importantly, though, working in groups allowed them to draw on one another as resources for making sense of the work sample and of the tasks I gave them. Third, I further directed novices' attention by dividing the activity into two discrete parts and providing guiding questions for each. In the first part of the activity, novices were to do the intellectual work of learning about a kid through his work on content; in the second part, they were guided to think more metacognitively about how the information they had gained might shape their future work with that kid. This latter piece is key to both the work of assigning competence and to the ethics of the practice, as it required novices to explicitly address the ways in which their views of kids might serve or disserve those kids in their work with them.

The to-do items, on the other hand, were largely unconstrained and unmediated and, therefore, of questionable value as approximations of practice.<sup>38</sup> I decided to incorporate the to-do items because I believed that they were a good way to give novices further practice with the work we did in class while also demonstrating the utility of our coursework for their classroom practice and would create some coherence across the multi-week gap between each meeting. However, the utility of approximations appears to hinge on the one hand on the degree of authenticity surrounding the practice enactment and, on the other hand, on the role that the instructor plays in offering guidance and feedback (Grossman, et al., 2009). In the case of the to-do items, the activity was only constrained insofar as I asked novices to try out

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<sup>38</sup> This is not to say that the to-do items were not valuable in other ways. Here I am only talking about the extent to which they functioned as approximations of practice.

individual parts of the practice of assigning competence at one time. For instance, the first to-do item asked novices to do one thing to get to know a kid better in the two weeks between classes, work that overlapped with the area of work of the practice regarding students. Beyond that albeit important constraint, novices undertook the to-do items in their own working classrooms in which they were fully responsible for instruction. Thus, while they were attempting to carry out the to-do items, they were also paying attention to all of the other things that teachers are responsible for during the day (e.g., lesson delivery, homework collection, taking attendance, etc., etc.).

Further, one of the constraints that I faced as an instructor in this program was that I was unable to visit the novices in their classrooms or to give them assignments like having them record their teaching on video or in writing.<sup>39</sup> This meant that novices and I had only their memories of what they'd done to rely on when we worked with the to-do items during the problems of practice discussions in class. When it comes to learning from practice, memory is a less than ideal medium with which to work. Novices could easily misremember details of what they tried or what happened, especially if they carried out their to-do item earlier in the window between classes. Novices might also work to present themselves in the best light if, for instance, they tried something that didn't work out well.<sup>40</sup> Or novices might not have a clear understanding of what they experienced or how it relates to learning the practice. For example, in his written

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<sup>39</sup> But weren't the to-do items assignments? Yes, technically. They were also, technically, voluntary. I presented them to novices as polite request statements (e.g., "I'd like you to try ..."). This was another constraint on how I designed them: I had to make them substantial enough that they were worth doing but not so substantial that anyone would complain that I was giving extra work.

<sup>40</sup> I did not see any evidence of this happening in this case, but it is an important caveat when working with teachers' reflections on their practice.

response about the Session 3 to-do item (Session 4, Assignment 1), Kevin describes one effort he made to push back on racism through content:

In addition to [*Romeo and Juliet*], we watched clips from *Dark Girls* and read some short testimonials that my students from last year wrote about dark skin. We then wrote and talked about how praising light skin benefits white people at the expense of everyone else. Additionally, it showed my students that other voices (i.e. not white men's) are important and worthy of analysis.

The lesson went well. There was high engagement, though some of our classroom discussion protocols broke down. If I were to do it again, I would emphasize the protocols multiple times so that the discussion moves smoother. (Kevin, Session 4, Assignment 1)

Kevin's response here indicates that he partially understands the purpose of the assignment. In the first paragraph, he clearly identifies the moves he made to try to interrupt one part of our working group definition of racism (i.e., the link between racism and identity). But in the second paragraph, rather than indicating how this work ties into the work of assigning competence, Kevin gives a generic summary reflection of how the activity went.

If I had been in his classroom to observe this lesson, or if we had been able to approximate something similar in one of our sessions together, I could have offered him feedback and guidance to help him link the content moves he made with aspects of the professional script for assigning competence such as purposely positioning students as competent. It's not clear whether or not that happened here, as Kevin doesn't include any specifics about the contributions students made verbally or in writing or how he interacted with them. It is easy to imagine ways that he could have undermined their competence, even as he engaged them with ostensibly anti-racist content. I simply have no way of ascertaining that based on what he tells me about his practice in this

response, which means that I also have no way of giving him the kind of feedback that could help him learn from this experience with the practice. My inability to effectively mediate novices' experiences of practice related to the to-do items meant that these functioned more as scaffolded reflections than approximations of practice.

**Proximity to enactment of the practice.** The other feature of approximations that emerged as especially salient to this work was the proximity of the approximation to the enactment of the focal practice. By this I mean that teacher educators need to consider how close the approximations they design are to the work that novices will do *in enactment*. This is different than considering the relative authenticity of the task, as authenticity speaks to how similar the conditions of the approximation are to classroom conditions. To illustrate what I mean here, consider that assigning competence is a fundamentally interactional practice—that is, it is a practice that can only occur in interaction with students. (Contrast this with a practice like *analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it* (TeachingWorks, 2016), where the teacher could enact some or all of the practice outside of direct interaction with students.) A teacher can only draw public attention to a given student's intellectual contribution (Featherstone, et al., 2011) if there is some interaction with students around content. As such, novice teachers should have opportunities to practice this interactional aspect of the practice.

This seems especially important in terms of developing novices' professional scripts for the practice because this interaction is one place where novices are likely to have prominent common scripts. One very common way that teachers respond to student contributions to class work is to evaluate and give feedback on whether or not the answer is correct (Cazden & Beck, 2003; Gutierrez et al., 1995). Another way that

teachers commonly respond to students is to praise them by saying something like “good job.” Due to the extent of experience novices are likely to have had with these forms of teacher responses to students’ contributions, novices are likely to expect that their own interactions with students will follow similar patterns. Therefore, when teaching a practice like assigning competence, which requires a very different type of response, it is logical to expect that novices would benefit from focused practice doing the part of the practice that is least familiar.

I struggled to offer my novices opportunities to engage in approximations that were proximal to the interactional work of assigning competence. The to-do items may have provided some access to this work, but, as discussed above the to-do items were not actually approximations of practice. The MAT assignment, which functioned well as an approximation, was proximal to the planning work associated with assigning competence but not to the interactional work. The closest I came to engaging novices in an approximation of the interactional work of the practice was with the case study activity during our final session. Recall from chapter 4 that this activity in part required novices to read student profiles and a sample of student conversation during a group work activity. Novices were to use this information to plan their next moves with these sample students to enable themselves to assign competence to them. One part of the case study task asked novices to generate statements they could make to the sample students to assign them competence. However, based on my field notes and collected case packets from that class session, neither of the case study groups got to that part of the activity. They each got hung up, for different reasons, in the lesson analysis portion of the activity. Even if they had gotten to the point of generating statements, the task

was still situated in the hypothetical planning space (“Record sentence starters you might use to assign competence ...”). This part of the activity was not presented as an approximation of enactment but rather as a plan for enactment.

My challenge in designing the activity for this last class lay in the web of constraints that I had dealt with throughout my work on the mini-course. In particular, the lack of continuity and coherence wrought by the program structure combined with a program culture that devalued our time together meant that even by our fifth session I did not believe that I had developed a strong enough relationship with novices for them to trust that an approximation of teacher-student interaction (e.g., a rehearsal) would be a worthwhile use of their time. When Shoshana and I met to plan the last session, we discussed the possibility of writing a role-play or rehearsal activity:

**Shoshana:** Are you having them enact the case? Like act it out together?

**Rebecca:** I haven't

**Shoshana:** Or just analyze it?

**Rebecca:** I haven't decided that yet. I could see going both ways.

**Shoshana:** I could see going both ways too.

**Rebecca:** Um, I just don't know that they would take an enactment seriously.

**Shoshana:** And it takes so much work getting people to the point

**Rebecca:** Right.

**Shoshana:** of being able to do it. I don't think you do. (Shoshana meeting, 04/11/17)

Although we both saw the relative pedagogical value in having the novices act out the case in some way, we both concluded that the risks to the work of trying an enactment

that the novices might not take seriously were too great. I planned and taught this session believing that if I had either had more consistent opportunities to form a working relationship with the novices or was teaching in a program that underscored the necessity of formal teacher education, then I would have been able to “pull off” a case enactment or rehearsal in this last session. Instead, I felt forced to settle for a case analysis that approximated the planning work associated with the practice of assigning competence but did not actually involve novices in anything like the enactment of the practice in interaction with kids.

This experience suggests that when designing approximations of practice to support the development of novices’ professional scripts, teacher educators must consider not only how they will mediate novices’ learning and how proximal the activities they design will be to enactment but also the nature of their pedagogical relationship with novices. My hesitancy in designing the case study was entirely rooted in my sense that I did not know novices very well or have a very robust pedagogical relationship with them. I was unable to anticipate how they might react to an activity that seemed like it would be outside of their comfort zones, based on what I had seen of the program to that point; and I was not confident that they had enough trust in me to go along with an approximation of enactment. I had to weigh the potential costs of an enactment going badly against not doing one at all. If I had had a more established relationship with novices, I might have been willing to risk it.

### **Summary**

Although I have presented the analyses separately, each facet of my teacher education work in this mini-course influenced and was influenced by the others. For

instance, my work to establish productive pedagogical relationships with novices were responsive to how I defined the professional ethical motivations of the practice and how I anticipated novices would respond. My efforts to plan and enact an approximation in the final class session was fundamentally shaped by the work I had engaged in throughout the mini-course to establish productive pedagogical relationships with novices. The complex and multilayered nature of the work of trying to teach a professional script for the anti-racist practice of assigning competence meant that throughout my planning and enactment of this mini-course, I had to juggle multiple goals and demands. Further, the programmatic constraints complicated what I had already anticipated would be difficult work with novices. In the final chapter, I discuss the implications of what I have learned from this analysis for the work of teacher education for anti-racist practice.



## Chapter 6

### What I Think It Means

This study has been an examination of the translational work that teacher educators must do in the space between research and personal ideas about how to teach anti-racist practice to novices and the actual teaching of anti-racist practice to novices. In particular, I set out to better understand how I might use the construct of professional scripts for teaching to inform teacher education design and instruction that explicitly connects anti-racist professional ethics to the learning and doing of practice. By using professional scripts as a design tool, I sought to help my novices begin to gain a sense of the structure that underlies professional, anti-racist practice by making clear where the bounds of acceptable variations in enactment lie.

As my findings illustrate, this work was not straightforward. Even for a teacher educator like myself, who has a decent amount of experience working with novice teachers on practice, who is well-versed in the literature on the teaching of practice, and who has long-standing commitments to and experience with anti-racist work, the work of moving from the literature to teacher education practice is complex, messy, and ill-defined. Some of the mess has to do with the kinds of programmatic constraints that teacher educators must commonly navigate; some of the mess has to do with the inherent difficulty of making ideas and practices accessible to novices. Teacher

educators who aim to teach anti-racist practice to novices need to better understand how to manage these challenges if their work is to be effective.

In this chapter, I consider several implications of this study for the work of teacher education that focuses on the teaching of professional, anti-racist practice. I first discuss two big lifts I faced in my work and what they reveal about teacher educators' work to manage programmatic contexts and confront common scripts for teaching. I then consider what can be learned from my efforts to apply a practice-based framework to the teaching of professional scripts for anti-racist practice. I suggest a revised decomposition of the practice of assigning competence as well as some principles for decomposing anti-racist practices more generally. I also identify important features of the work of approximating anti-racist practice in teacher education and highlight an important outstanding question related to crafting approximations of practice. Finally, I address the possibility that a *script for teacher education* that parallels scripts for teaching is visible in my work and reflect on the kinds of questions this could raise for the work of anti-racist, practice-based teacher education.

### **Managing the Programmatic Context**

All teacher education work takes place in some kind of programmatic context that shapes what the teacher educator can do and how she might go about trying to do it. While some teacher education does occur in well-resourced, cohesive, and orderly environments designed and run by professional teacher educators who specialize in the work, a great deal does not. The American Association of University Professors reports that over half of all faculty appointments in higher education—which would include appointments in teacher education—are contingent (American Association of University

Professors, 2017) This suggests that in traditional university-based teacher education, teacher educators are as likely to be non-tenure track faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants as they are to be full-time specialists in teacher education. And this does not account for the proliferation of alternative certification programs that often hire former classroom teachers and program alumni to serve as teacher educators. Further, those teacher education faculty who “specialize” in teacher education (i.e., they research teacher education and/or teach teacher education classes regularly) rarely have any specific training in teacher education. Typically, their professional training has been in some sub-speciality of education (e.g., childhood literacy, math education) rather than professional education, yet they are still responsible for teaching professional education courses.

I don't highlight these characteristics of the teacher education force to indicate that teacher educators are unqualified or incapable of the work they do. Rather, I include this information to illustrate the point that because so many teacher educators are hired on contingent and often ad hoc bases, as I was in the case of the course I taught for this study, they are more likely to have to manage program contexts that they have not helped to design and over which they have relatively little influence. In other words, teacher educators' intentions for their work with novices may not align with the orientations, resources, and goals that the teacher education program they work within promotes, and teacher educators may have very little leverage to change the program in meaningful ways. Additionally, the “specialists,” even where they do have some leverage over programmatic contexts, may not have the expertise in professional

education or the time and energy necessary<sup>41</sup> to significantly disrupt programmatic constraints. Given these circumstances, most teacher educators' options are to either change their intentions to better match the existing programmatic context or find ways to manage the programmatic context so that they might still do the work that they set out to do.

### **Two Big Lifts**

In this study, the programmatic context that I had to operate within constrained, and to a certain extent directly interfered with, my efforts to use professional scripts to teach the anti-racist practice of assigning competence to my novices. The toolbox orientation that I observed reflected and reinforced a common script for teaching that reduced the complexity of the work of teaching in ways that undermined novices' learning in and from practice and that contributed to status quo approaches to the work of teaching that I have argued throughout this dissertation are racist and harmful to kids. Thus, I was faced with what I have come to think of as two big lifts that were both central to the teacher education work I was trying to do with my novices. On the one hand, I was faced with the lift of helping novices learn to practice practice in more complex and nuanced ways. In order to move them towards learning practice that amounted to more than just a series of disconnected strategies off a checklist, I had to try to find ways to help them see, talk about, and begin to enact practice that reflect the inherent complexity and interconnectedness of the work. On the other hand, I was also

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<sup>41</sup> Full-time faculty whose research agendas are not specifically *about* teacher education face structural disincentives regarding promotion and tenure that might discourage them from devoting too much focus to the state of the teacher education program.

faced with the lift of helping novices develop their critical skills for identifying, analyzing, and countering racism in the everyday structures of schooling and work of teaching.

As a teacher educator, I wasn't successful at making these two lifts at the same time in this course. I made an implicit decision during the four-week break between Sessions 2 and 3 to place more emphasis on my anti-racist agenda for my work with novices and less emphasis on my agenda for them to practice practice. I opted to foreground the anti-racist agenda because I felt as a teacher educator and as a White person that it was my responsibility to keep racism and anti-racism front-of-mind for novices and to help novices deepen their understanding of practice using these lenses; to do otherwise, I felt, would be to fall into patterns of White comfort (Gadd, in progress) and to contribute to an unacceptable status quo. As such, in the final three sessions of the course, I devoted the bulk of my energy to cultivating novices' critical analytic skills for examining practice (Gadd, 2018; see Figure 6.1 next page).

<b>Session One (in-person)</b>	<b>Session Two (online)</b>	<b>Session Three (in-person)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a group definition of systemic racism based on trailer for <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i></li> <li>• Applying the group definition to an instance of teaching practice</li> <li>• Applying the group definition to our own practice: carousel about how we define “smartness” in secondary ELA</li> <li>• To-do item: Try one anti-racist move in your classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment 1: Reflect on Session 1 to-do item</li> <li>• Assignment 2: Analysis of Session 1 carousel activity</li> <li>• Assignment 3: Design and critique a multiple abilities treatment for a recent lesson</li> <li>• Assignment 4 (to-do item): Try another anti-racist move in your classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallery walk and discussion of Session 1 and Session 2 to-do items</li> <li>• Case study activity: A Case of Secondary Writing Instruction</li> </ul>

*Figure 6.1.* Final three course sessions. The activity sequence occurred over the course of three class sessions spread across five calendar weeks.

Although I did still make some attempts to integrate aspects of practicing the practice of assigning competence (e.g., the MAT in Session 4) and design features of practice-based teacher education (e.g., attempting to include approximations), the primary theme of these final three sessions had to do with identifying and analyzing racism in our own and other’s practice and trying to devise moves we could make against it. Helping novices to understand practice in this way is an important part of teaching them to do anti-racist practice. Moreover, it reflects a shift away from teacher education that addresses principles of anti-racism (or, commonly, the more general idea of social justice) without clearly tying those principles to teachers’ actions in classrooms. The work I did to foreground what I refer to here as the anti-racist agenda is one part of the

work necessary to teach anti-racist practice, which I would have built on had I had more time in the course.

**Confronting the toolbox orientation.** As a researcher, the shift I made is significant because it highlights the ways in which teacher educators have to manage the constraints that they face in real programmatic contexts, especially when faced with an entrenched common script like the toolbox orientation. The toolbox orientation that I identified in this context ran directly counter to the work I aimed to do to teach professional, anti-racist practice. Other teacher educators who set out to do similar work are also likely to encounter this common script. Anecdotally, the toolbox orientation was familiar to me from my own teacher education training, from years of in-service professional development, and from my own early work as a teacher educator. In addition, an initial search of “teacher toolbox” or “teacher toolkit” in the ERIC database returned 210 peer-reviewed articles. Those that focus on teaching and/or learning to teach include pieces such as “The Toolbox and the Mirror: Reflection and Practice in ‘Progressive’ Teacher Education” (Attwood & Seale-Collazo, 2002) and “*Handy Manny* and the Emergent Literacy Technology Toolkit” (Hourcade, Parette, Boeckmann, & Blum, 2010)—both of which take up the toolbox orientation as an unremarkable part of the intellectual landscape of learning to teach. A google search of those terms returns dozens and dozens of hits for websites and products that are pitched as quick and easy resources for everything from curriculum development across a range of content areas and topics to classroom management to tips and tricks for making it through the first year. These sites and products have been developed by academic institutions (e.g., East Carolina University, 2018), school districts (e.g., Tuloso-Midway Independent

School District, n.d.), and teachers themselves (e.g., "Teacher toolbox," n.d.) among others. In short, teacher educators who set out to cultivate novices' professional scripts for anti-racist teaching practice, are likely to encounter some version of the toolbox orientation and will need to be prepared to manage it.

The fact that the toolbox orientation is such an unremarkable common script for teaching makes it a formidable obstacle for teacher educators who aim to do anti-racist and practice-based work with novices. The toolbox orientation obscures the complexity and nuance of authentic teaching practice at the same time that it offers easily mastered "solutions" to the problems of practice that teachers routinely face. These "solutions" tend to replicate existing racist structures and patterns of practice in teaching, while at the same time deflecting critical interrogation of those structures and patterns of practice. Teachers, especially novice teachers who are trying to make it through the school day, are encouraged by the toolbox orientation to seek out quick fixes to problems as they arise; the success of the toolbox orientation is, then, based on the teacher's sense of short-term "survival," not on the extent to which she is able to disrupt racism or develop more nuanced approaches to practice. Further, because the toolbox orientation appears successful in the short-term, novices are unlikely to question it—why mess with something that seems to be working? Thus, the toolbox orientation reflects a common script for teaching that perpetuates racism and limits novices' opportunities to learn in and from practice, as it simultaneously resists efforts to critique and dismantle it. Teacher educators who aim to do anti-racist, practice-based work with novices must be prepared to confront the challenges posed by the toolbox orientation when they inevitably encounter them.



In my case, the toolbox orientation was promoted and reinforced by the programmatic context. As an informal and contingent teacher educator in this setting, I didn't have the kind of leverage necessary to influence the program culture. However, within my own course, being explicit with myself and my novices about my priorities for the course from the beginning of our work together was vital. I was not trying to retrofit social justice ideas onto existing teacher education practice; rather, I was trying to devise teacher education practice that centered anti-racist work in order to support novice teachers to develop classroom teaching practices that could disrupt the status quo. My decision to foreground the anti-racist lift was directly connected to the logical premises that I laid out for novices in the course overview document (Figure 3.4, p. 77; Appendix A). Having identified these premises from the outset as drivers of my work gave me a direction to go in when it became obvious that I would have to deal with such an entrenched toolbox orientation.

This suggests that teacher educators who engage in this kind of work should spend time making explicit for themselves and for their novices what their priorities are with respect to anti-racist practice and how those priorities will inform instructional decision-making throughout the course. I would go further and argue that these priorities should be spelled out in formal course documentation. I say this because of my experiences during the pilot study: I ostensibly held the same commitments to anti-racist practice during the pilot study that I brought with me into the dissertation study. However, I didn't spell them out in any formal way during the pilot study and, as such, lost focus on them when confronted with the discomfort of engaging novices directly with issues of race and racism (Gadd, in progress). I do not suggest that including a set

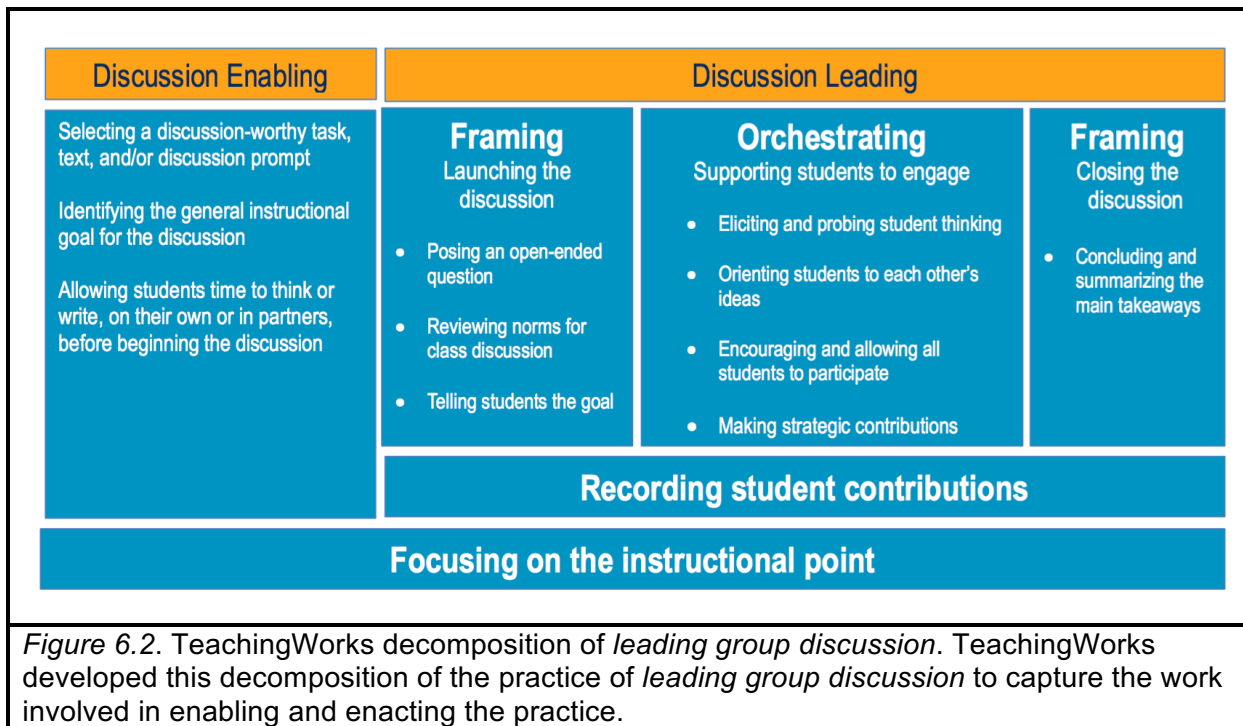
of logical premises as I did here is a panacea for confronting the toolbox orientation in anti-racist teacher education. However, having that formal documentation provided a form of extrinsic accountability to me as teacher educator to maintain my stated commitments to anti-racist practice even as I had to adjust to the constraints of the course.

### **Applying Ideas from Practice-Based Teacher Education**

A major part of the appeal of practice-based teacher education, for me, is that it is both intuitive and logically consistent with what is known about how people learn things. Despite this, the move from research on practice-based approaches to teacher education to the application of practice-based approaches in teacher education is not straightforward. As I found in this study, unpacking practice in ways that support novice learning can be quite challenging, even when one is well-versed in the relevant bodies of literature. In this section, I discuss implications of my efforts in this course for better understanding how teacher educators might decompose and approximate practice to support the cultivation of professional scripts for anti-racist practice.

### **Decomposing Anti-Racist Practice**

In order for a decomposition to be useful as a tool for both novices and teacher educators, it must capture the complexity of the practice and reflect enactment of the practice in some way that is intelligible in teacher education. Figure 6.2 contains a decomposition of the practice of *leading group discussion* that meets both of these criteria.



This decomposition signals the complexity of the practice by identifying the types of moves a teacher must make both before and during discussion (e.g., eliciting and probing student thinking) without reducing them to a checklist of decontextualized steps. It also reflects enactment. In this decomposition, the preparatory work required for leading a group discussion (i.e., Discussion Enabling) is distinguished from the enactment of the practice (i.e., Discussion Leading), and the areas of work (Framing, Orchestrating, Recording Student Contributions, and Focusing on the Instructional Point) are related to each other in a way that reflects how a teacher would carry out each area of work when leading a group discussion. A novice could, with some support, use this decomposition to understand both the parts of the work of discussion and how they are recomposed in practice; a teacher educator could use this tool to plan instruction that coherently represents the work of leading a group discussion.

However, one shortcoming of this decomposition as a decomposition is that it doesn't explicitly signal how attention to equity is bound up with learning and/or doing this practice. The inclusion of moves such as "posing an open-ended question," "eliciting and probing student thinking," and "orienting students to each other's ideas" all signal a concern with centering student thinking, but that concern is somewhat implicit and possibly missed by teacher educators and novices who are encountering this decomposition for the first time. It is easy to imagine that one could learn and enact the practice of leading group discussion as it is decomposed here in ways that uphold equity and disrupt the status quo; it is equally easy to imagine that one could also learn and enact the practice as it is decomposed here in ways that ignore equity and reinforce the status quo. Therefore, another element of decompositions that are useful for teacher education that aims to cultivate professional scripts for teaching is some explicit signaling of the professional ethical motivation for the practice and how it relates to enactment of the practice.

If I were to teach this same course again, I would design my work around a decomposition of the practice that looks more like Figure 6.3.

<b>Enabling <i>Assigning Competence</i></b>	<b>Enacting <i>Assigning Competence</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know students as individuals and as members of groups</li> <li>• Planning a lesson that (a) broadens how disciplinary content is conceived of and represented and (b) broadens the number and kind of opportunities to learn that kids are offered</li> <li>• Preparing a <i>multiple abilities treatment</i> that explicitly names the multiple kinds of “smarts” that kids will need to successfully engage in a given lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a kid or kids who make an intellectual contribution that reflects one or more of the “smarts” that appear in your <i>multiple abilities treatment</i>.</li> <li>• Consider the kid(s)’ social position within and outside your classroom, and identify kid(s) who are not typically considered “smart” or capable in the discipline.</li> <li>• Consider the kid(s)’ intellectual contribution, and identify how it helps to broaden the group’s ideas about what constitutes legitimate competence within the discipline.</li> <li>• Publicly name the kid(s)’ intellectual contribution and how it adds to the group’s learning. Do this in ways that are respectful of the kid(s) being recognized.</li> </ul>
<p>Ethical Motivation: Focus on identifying and disrupting social hierarchies to reposition marginalized kids as competent.</p>	

*Figure 6.3.* Revised decomposition of *assigning competence*. This revision of the decomposition of the practice of *assigning competence* is based on my analysis of my work in the mini-course.

As with the decomposition of *leading group discussion* above, I have parsed the practice of assigning competence into work that teachers do to enable the enactment of the practice and moves that teachers do in enactment of the practice. So, for example, one area of work that teachers must engage in to be able to enact the practice is “Getting to know students as individuals and as members of groups.” Teachers must learn how to learn about and make sense of kids’ multiple, intersecting identities in ways that account for the particular forms of marginalization that members of different social identity groups face, but teachers must learn to do this without essentializing kids and reducing their identities and experiences to stereotypes. If teachers take a “colorblind” (or “gender blind” or “ability blind,” etc.) approach to making sense of kids, they will miss out on important features of kids’ experiences that shape their opportunities to learn. However, if teachers see kids as only a personification of what the teacher reads as their most salient identity, then teachers will be unable to address kids as the vibrant

individuals that they are. In either case, the teacher would be contributing to forms of ongoing oppression that limit kids' opportunities to learn. The work that I did with novices during Session 2 on the dilemma of knowing was intended to address this aspect of the practice of assigning competence.

The right side of the decomposition captures the moves that teachers make when assigning competence, as I have defined the practice in this dissertation. A key difference between this decomposition of assigning competence and that of a practice like leading group discussion is that three of the four moves I have identified as part of the enactment of assigning competence would take place inside of the teacher's head and out of view of any observer. Only the fourth move listed, "Publicly naming the kid(s)' intellectual contribution ...," is visible to an outside observer when it is enacted. The other three moves could only be "witnessed" if the teacher were to engage in a think aloud as she carried them out or if she were to reflect on them orally or in writing after the fact. I have included them as elements of the enactment of the practice in this decomposition because, whether directly observable or not, these moves are essential to doing the practice of assigning competence, and, further, these forms of analysis are teachable to novices as intellectual moves. For example, the case study activity in Session 5 was in part intended to engage my novices in the intellectual moves associated with the second bullet point, "Consider the kid(s)' social position ..."

Finally, the bottom box connecting the enabling work with the enactment reflects the central professional ethical motivation of the practice of assigning competence and is meant to signal that this ethical motivation is bound up with all facets of the work of the practice. In this way, the key structure that professional scripts provide for practice

(i.e., the professional ethical boundaries that constrain what can be considered acceptable variations in enactment) is made visible in the decomposition. Additionally, I have attempted to include language that indicates how complex this work actually is. For example, the final bullet point in the enactment box includes a reminder to teachers and teacher educators that they must publicly identify kids' competence "in ways that are respectful of the kid(s) being recognized." This is because teachers may need to find different ways of identifying kids' competence depending on the grade level, social dynamics, and personal characteristics of the young people involved (Gadd, Wilkes, & Ball, in progress). Rather than providing a reductivist, one-size-fits-all toolbox of pre-specified sentence starters, by decomposing the practice in this way I have tried to reflect the complex analytic and decision-making work that teachers must do in order to enact the practice.

**Teaching and learning the practice.** This decomposition has several implications for the work of teacher education based. First, it's important to recognize that any one of the elements of the practice I've identified in either the enabling or the enactment box is complex enough in itself to demand sustained instructional attention. In fact, the elements included in the enabling box might even be productively treated as practices in their own right. This suggests that to teach these elements, teacher educators require sufficient instructional time with novices to effectively address the various elements of the practice and how they fit together with one another. The actual minutes of instruction required likely vary somewhat in response to other features of the teacher education program or course within which one is working. However, helping novices to learn elements of the practice like "Preparing a *multiple abilities treatment*" or

“Consider the kid(s)’ intellectual contribution” is likely to require sustained attention—certainly more than I was able to offer my novices in the course I taught for this study.

Second, the teacher educator must carefully consider how she will make visible the invisible enactment moves of identifying and analyzing kids’ intellectual contributions and considering kids’ social positions in order to strategically assign competence. She must design activities and assignments and employ pedagogies that engage novices in doing the analytic and decision-making work entailed by the practice (more on approximations below). She must also build in opportunities for novices to make their learning of these elements of the practice visible to her so that she can track their progress and provide appropriate feedback and supports.

Finally, all work that a teacher educator does using this decomposition of the practice should explicitly surface the central professional ethical motivation of the practice and help novices to see how it impacts both the enabling and enactment elements. For instance, a teacher might try to get to know kids better for a number of reasons that are disconnected from enabling the enactment of assigning competence (e.g., to tailor content to their interests; to form relationships with them that can be leveraged for the purposes of behavior management<sup>42</sup>). By explicitly tying that element of the decomposition to the ethical motivation of the practice, teacher educators can make clear that learning about kids as individuals and as members of groups allows teachers to see kids in ways that enable them to assign competence effectively. This attention to the ethical motivation of the practice orients and constrains teacher

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<sup>42</sup> I include these examples because they are commonly named purposes for teachers to get to know kids. They reflect common scripts about what the work of teaching is and what it’s for and should be critiqued and reconceived for anti-racist practice. However, that is beyond the scope of this section.



educators' work in ways that support the cultivation of novices' professional scripts for the practice.

### **Approximating Anti-Racist Practice**

As discussed in chapter 5, for approximations of practice to be meaningful, they should reflect opportunities for novices to practice practice that are mediated somehow by the teacher educator, and they should reflect some part of the practice that is proximal to what novices will have to do in enactment. In this study, I struggled to meet these conditions in part because of the programmatic constraints I faced. In particular, the limited time and inconsistent schedule I had to work with novices severely hampered my work to build rapport and establish legitimacy and trust with novices. As I told Shoshana in our planning meeting for the last class session, I didn't believe I had formed enough of a pedagogical relationship with novices to engage them in successful role play enactment, which led me to change my plans in ways that undermined my intention to have the course culminate in a more robust approximation of the practice than the case study analysis turned out to be. In addition, the work of approximating practice is not as straightforward as it might seem. Teacher educators must be able to clearly identify what about a practice is worth approximating and what conditions are necessary for creating meaningful approximations. I discuss each of these issues below.

**Managing risks in approximations of practice.** Although all teaching hinges to some extent on the quality of the pedagogical relationship between teacher and students, my experiences in this course lead me to argue that engaging novices in meaningful approximations of anti-racist practice require even greater attention to the

cultivation of such relationships by the teacher educator because of the relative risks involved. For the teacher educator, there is a risk that novices will not “buy in” to an approximation activity enough for it to be educative; this was my worry when I told Shoshana that I was worried my novices might not take an enactment seriously (Shoshana meeting, 04/11/17). If that were to happen, then from the teacher educator’s perspective valuable instructional time that could have been spent more productively is lost. In addition, depending on when in a course such an incident occurs, the teacher educator might be concerned about damaging her ongoing relationship with novices and impeding her ability to do work in later sessions with them. From novices’ perspective, risks lie in opening up one’s developing practice to peers and to the teacher educator, which has the potential to lead to embarrassment or frustration.<sup>43</sup> For both the teacher educator and novices, these risks are amplified by the added layer of addressing race and racism during an approximation of anti-racist practice.

In order to mitigate these risks, it is imperative that the teacher educator develop strong and effective pedagogical relationships with novices prior to engaging them in approximations of anti-racist practice. Teacher educators need to pay special attention to the ways in which they establish their legitimacy to do work on anti-racist practice with novices, work that is likely to look quite different depending on the particular constellation of identities that the teacher educator and her novices hold. In my case, because I am a White woman in a White-dominated field, because I was associated with an elite institution that novices might have seen as removed from the concerns of the contexts in which they worked, and because of the particular identities I perceived

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<sup>43</sup> Something like this seemed to happen to Felicia in our last class session, prompting her to walk out.

my novices to hold, I made moves to explicitly demonstrate critical self-awareness and a concern for novices' experiences as teachers and with race and racism. The mental calculus I did would have been very different if even one of those details had been different (e.g., if I were a woman of color instead of White). Thus, for teacher educators who set out to use practice-based methods like approximations to teach anti-racist practice, it is imperative that they spend time critically reflecting on their own identities, what they know or infer about their novices' identities, and the specifics of their course contexts. They must ask themselves questions like, "What are the most visible aspects of my identities to novices, and what are foreseeable ways in which they might interpret me based on those identities?" and "What do I think I know about my novices, on what basis do I think I know this about them, and how does my presumed knowledge of them shape my work with them?"

Teacher educators must also work to intentionally position themselves and their novices in ways that enable this work. For example, the work I did in Session 3 to have novices reflect on their lived experiences of race and racism prior to beginning our academic work was meant to position me as someone who at least talked the talk of critical reflection and was meant to position them as having valid experiences that could inform our work together. Teacher educators who intend to teach anti-racist practice must explicitly attend to this kind of positioning work in order to foster the pedagogical relationships necessary to enable the risk-taking that approximations of practice demand.

**What is worth approximating?** In addition to these considerations, the definition and decomposition of the practice to be learned has to make clear what about

the practice is worth approximating. I had developed a decomposition of assigning competence for use in the course that was at too high a level of abstraction to accomplish this. The revised decomposition of the practice brings the “approximate-able” elements of the practice into greater focus. However, it is worth pointing out that the revised decomposition in Figure 6.3 is the *third* iteration of the decomposition that I have developed across two courses I have taught focused on the practice of assigning competence. I have also had the opportunity to collaborate with other teacher educators who teach this practice in practice-based courses (Gadd et al., in progress), as well as the opportunity to draw on a significant source of expertise on practice and practice-based teacher education through my professional association with TeachingWorks at the University of Michigan.

My point in highlighting these things is that despite these resources, I still struggled to devise a useful decomposition that could support the development of meaningful approximations. For those teacher educators who work in less-resourced, less supportive, and/or less collaborative contexts, this work of moving between the literature on specific practices and on PBTE and the work of decomposing and approximating practices in teacher education instruction is likely to be even more difficult. Teacher education researchers and theorists can facilitate these efforts by reporting on their work in ways that speak directly to the application of their ideas in a range of teacher education contexts. One way of doing this is to provide concrete examples of application coupled with analysis that highlights the relevant contextual factors that inform the work. This is something I have tried to offer in this dissertation.

Teacher educators who attempt to develop meaningful approximations of a practice on their own can begin by focusing on what about the practice that is most proximal to enactment can be approximated and how can they as teacher educators mediate those experiences so that novices receive substantive feedback and support. My efforts in this study and in the pilot study before it indicate that this process is likely to be iterative across multiple attempts to teach a given practice. Thus, teacher educators should be prepared to be patient with themselves and with this work.

**Is assigning competence “approximate-able”?** Finally, an outstanding question that I have about the work of developing meaningful approximations is to what extent practices like assigning competence are “approximate-able” in teacher education coursework (i.e., not in field placements)? The degree to which assigning competence depends on knowledge of *specific kids* has been a real stumbling block for me in both the pilot study and in this dissertation study because I was unsure how to design approximations that would help novices think about particular kids strategically and not as abstract generalizations. This is not to say that there are practices that don’t depend on teachers’ knowledge of kids as individuals, but the crux of assigning competence—the thing without which the practice falls apart—is the teacher’s ability to account for particular kids’ unique identities within existing social hierarchies. Finding ways to include that in approximations of the practice has been extremely challenging.

Two ways that I tried to address this issue in this study were (1) the design of the student work activity in Session 2 and (2) the inclusion of sample student profiles and a sample student interaction in the case analysis in Session 5 (see Appendix C). While the student work sample was authentic, I created the student profiles and sample

interaction based on kids I have taught over the years. There is a real danger in creating and using such materials, that I could essentialize kids in ways that undermine the anti-racist ethical motivation of the practice and/or that I could enable novices to do so. However, trying to approximate the practice without reference to specific kids divorces the practice from the professional ethical motivation and reduces it to simple praise. I don't claim to have a satisfactory response to this apparent dilemma, nor do I claim that I think this work is impossible. I highlight this issue here because it warrants further study by both teacher education researchers and teacher educators who are engaged in this kind of work.

### **Scripts for Teacher Education?**

One last aspect of my teacher education work in this course that is worth considering is that there are indications in my work of an emergent *script for teacher education* underlying my practice that parallels the professional script for teaching I used to guide course design and instruction for novices. This script for teacher education is perhaps most visible at this point in two places during the semester. The first example is the shift I made between Sessions 2 and 3 to foreground my anti-racist agenda. I made this decision because my own ethical commitments related to preparing teachers to serve kids well are rooted in a concern for equity. These commitments informed the decisions I made throughout the course about what to prioritize, what activities to design, what moves to make during sessions, etc. In this moment, in which I realized that I was going to have to adapt to the realities of how my course was unfolding, my ethical commitments gave me a clear direction to move in. This reflects the role of professional ethics in professional scripts for teaching in that my ethical

commitments constrained the range of acceptable (to me) options in ways that allowed me to respond to the particularities of the context.

The second instance occurred in the final course session, when Felicia walked out of class and I didn't try to make her return. Here again, this incident highlights the role that my ethical commitments played in structuring my work. Although on the one hand, I would have much preferred that Felicia stay in class and finish out the activity with her group, I made the decision to let her go because I didn't know how to talk her into staying without undermining my ethical commitments to anti-racist practice. I was concerned that the things I could think of to say to her in that moment might have communicated acceptance or even approval of her behavior in a way that would reflect White solidarity and undermine my anti-racist commitments for the course. As with the first example, my ethical commitments served as a constraint on what I saw as acceptable options in that moment, pointing to the possibility of an emergent script structure supporting my teacher education practice.

If teacher educators and researchers are to apply the scripts construct to teacher education practice, several important questions arise. First, are there common scripts for teacher education that develop informally, akin to common scripts for teaching that I have argued here are a product of the apprenticeship of observation? My gut instinct is that there are and that they are closely tied to common scripts for teaching and what folks assume about teacher education based on what they think they know about teaching. It may be that common scripts for teacher education are less entrenched than common scripts for teaching because teacher educators are likely to have much less

informal experience of teacher education prior to beginning their practice. Further investigation into the work of teacher education is warranted.

Second, how might the field define professional ethics in teacher education? In the examples offered above, I implicitly accept that my professional ethical motivation for teacher education practice parallels the professional ethical motivation I proposed for professional scripts for teaching.<sup>44</sup> Is this necessarily the case? Further, what should teacher educators' ethical commitments most privilege: teacher educators' commitments to their novices or teacher educators' commitments to their novices' future students? On the one hand, novices are learners in their own right and, as educators, teacher educators owe them care, support, and opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them. On the other hand, novices are adults who are proposing to take responsibility for developing young human beings who will have little recourse if their teacher turns out to be incompetent or, worse yet, malicious. Do teacher educators not owe it to kids to act as gatekeepers who will demand excellence from novices and who will bar those who cannot demonstrate that they won't harm kids from entering the profession at all? To what extent does this complicate teacher educators' obligations to novice teachers, and which set of obligations should teacher educators prioritize when they come into conflict?

Third, what teacher education practices might scripts for teacher education support? Throughout this dissertation I have talked about "teacher education practice" in the general sense of practice that comprises "what teacher educators do" (see Lampert,

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<sup>44</sup> From chapter 2, p. 49: "providing equitable opportunities to learn ambitious content to all students in ways that will enable them to engage critically and consciously within and across groups as members of a diverse democracy."



2010 for a discussion of the different uses of "practice" in the literature on teaching). But what about specific professional practices that teacher educators employ or might employ? Do they exist? To what extent do they parallel the kinds of practices that have been identified as core to the work of teaching? And to what extent can the argument that I have made here concerning professional scripts for teaching be applied to a concept of professional scripts for teacher education? Again, my initial instinct is that there are likely many close parallels that are worth exploring, as well as important differences that might clearly distinguish practices for teaching from practices for teacher education. Further work is needed to clarify what these practices might be and how they might relate to scripts for teacher education.

Finally, if scripts for teacher education is a useful construct for understanding teacher educators' practice, it is worth asking whether and how it could also be useful in preparing teacher educators for their work with novices? Unlike teachers, most of whom receive *some* form of preservice or in-service teacher education support, specific training and professional development for teacher educators is much less common. Given this, how could scripts for teacher education be used to inform the improvement of teacher education practice? Where would that work take place? Who would be responsible for it? What opportunities to practice their practice might teacher educators most benefit from and how would those opportunities be offered? Again, further work is needed to conceptualize scripts for teacher education so that their utility as an analytic and/or design tool can be better assessed.

## **Conclusion**

Teacher education that supports novice teachers' development of anti-racist practice is a vital piece of the puzzle of improving equity in schooling. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the most common forms of teaching practice in American schools stem from a racist historical context and serve to perpetuate and reinforce a racist status quo that harms kids in classrooms every day. Teacher education can intervene on this process by identifying anti-racist practices that can be taught to novices and developing teacher education pedagogies and practices for teaching anti-racist practices in order to disrupt the status quo. I have proposed a conceptual tool, professional scripts for teaching, that supports this work by offering clear ethical boundaries for what constitutes professional, anti-racist practice. However as illustrated here, the work involved in using this tool to move from ideas about anti-racist practice to teaching it to novices is fraught with challenges that teacher educators must manage. My hope is that by opening up my own teacher education practice for close examination, as I have done here, my efforts can be a resource for other teacher educators involved in this necessary and difficult work.

## **Coda**

When I talk about scripts, professional or otherwise, I am talking about the underlying organizational structure that gives logic to observable patterns of practice. The adjective—professional versus common—tells you what kind of logic you are dealing with. Is it professional logic? That is, are observable patterns of practice organized according to some set of professional ethics such as those I set out in this dissertation? Or, are observable patterns of practice organized according to a logic that is informed by everyday expectations of teaching as those expectations have been set by the apprenticeship of observation?

In this section, I address some common points of confusion that have arisen with respect to scripts and propose directions for future work with this construct.

### **Ethics and Action**

One issue that has proven to be a stumbling block in my efforts to make the case for scripts has been related to questions about the utility of focusing on the relationship between values (common scripts) or ethics (professional scripts) and enactment of practice in teacher education. One argument against doing so is that individuals rarely think consciously about why they're doing what they're doing while they're doing it; in fact, individuals often act in ways that are contrary to their stated beliefs and then retroactively adjust their beliefs to align with their actions (Festinger, 1962; Pinker, 2009). Another compelling argument is that teacher education is not a particularly

effective lever for changing the motives and beliefs of intending teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, 1987; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Lortie, 1975/2002; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

However, I'm not arguing that professional scripts are useful for making novices reflect on their beliefs during enactment or for changing the beliefs novices bring with them into teacher education. Instead, I'm exploring the question of whether it's possible to teach novices *to act as if* they believe in anti-racist professional ethics by defining and teaching a particular anti-racist logic of professional practice in conjunction with teaching the moves associated with that logic of practice. I argue that professional scripts are a useful conceptual tool because they help teacher educators to identify the kinds of decisions and moves a novice teacher would have to make in order for her enactment of practice to reflect an underlying logic of professional ethics. That is, professional scripts enable teacher educators to say, "I would expect the practice of a teacher who held anti-racist beliefs and motives *to look this way*. I would expect that teacher *to do these things* and *to make these kinds of decisions* in response to kids." The teacher educator can then focus on teaching the kinds of moves and decision-making necessary to produce that picture of practice.

### **Who Uses Scripts?**

Another point of confusion with respect to scripts has to do with the question of who uses them: teacher educators or teachers. In part, this is a problem of language. As I discussed in chapter 2, scripts can be used as either a descriptive tool or a design tool. Further, when used as a descriptive tool, they capture the phenomenon of individuals *acting as if according to scripts* under many circumstances (see footnote 9,

p. 30). So, when I say things like “enacting scripts,” what I mean is that “someone’s observable actions are consistent with an underlying logic, which I refer to as a script.” Similarly, when I write about “cultivating novices’ scripts for teaching,” I mean “teaching novices to enact practice in ways that are consistent with a particular underlying logic, which I refer to as a script.” In neither of these examples does the individual who “enacts” the script need to even be aware of the idea of scripts; certainly, the individual who “enacts” the script does not need to be thought of as “using” a script. Instead, in these examples, scripts are being used as a descriptive tool to make sense of and talk about the organizational logic that can be inferred from the observable enactment of practice (“enacting scripts”) or upon which teacher education instruction will be based (“cultivating scripts”).

In this dissertation, I am *only* concerned with how teacher educators use professional scripts to design instruction (see my research question on p. 3). I will discuss this further below. However, due to the nature of teacher education as an interactional endeavor that involves novice teachers, it was necessary to use this language of “cultivating scripts” to try to communicate what I was up to in my work—namely, attempting to teach my novices to enact the practice of assigning competence *as if according to* a professional script for that practice. In other words, I was trying to teach them to enact the practice in a way that was consistent with the underlying logic of professional ethics as I defined them. Thus, there are instances in this dissertation in which I have to rely on the descriptive facet of the scripts construct to capture what I was doing.

## Scripts Are Not Practices

It is also important to understand that a script for teaching, professional or otherwise, is not a teaching practice. Identifying a teaching practice tells you *what* work you will see a teacher engage in; identifying a script for a practice tells you *how* that work will be carried out. For example, leading a group discussion is an example of a teaching practice. If we were to go into a classroom in which the teacher had told us she would be leading a group discussion, then there are certain kinds of work we would expect to see her engaged in: launching the discussion by asking an open-ended question, coordinating kids' contributions by saying how they relate to one another, asking probing questions to get kids to say more, and doing some kind of wrap-up to signal the end of the discussion are all kinds of work, or moves, that we might expect to see a teacher carry out during a group discussion.

Those moves add up to the practice, but they do not add up to a script of any kind because naming the moves on their own doesn't tell us anything about *how* the teacher enacts them. One teacher might enact these four moves in a way that reflects a common script for the work of teaching. For example, she might ask an open-ended question, but coordinate kids' contributions and probe their ideas in ways that funnel them toward a predetermined conclusion. This would reflect the features of common scripts that I described in chapter 1 related to constraining what "counts" as content and limiting kids' discourse related to content. Another teacher might enact the same four moves in a way that reflects a professional script for the work of teaching.<sup>45</sup> This teacher

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<sup>45</sup> Please note, again, that in examples like this where I write about teachers "enacting" one script or another, I am talking about teachers *acting as if* according to a script. When I give examples like this, I am using the scripts construct as a descriptive tool to explain the type of underlying, organizational logic (i.e., the type of script) that can be inferred from observing a teacher's enactment of practice. The teacher

might ask the open-ended question and then coordinate kids' contributions and probe their ideas so that their thinking is centered and her primary role is to help them critically examine their own and others' ideas. This would reflect the features of professional scripts that I described in chapter 2 related to expanding kids' opportunities to learn by helping them to engage critically and consciously with content. Each of the teachers in these examples enacted the same practice, but an observer can infer that they relied on a different script, a different underlying logic, to do so.

I need to further develop and carefully attend to the language used to write and talk about scripts in order to mitigate these issues related to who "uses" scripts and what their relationship is with practices in the future.

### **A Design Tool for Teacher Education**

As a design tool for teacher education, as I have used them in this dissertation, professional scripts require teacher educators to make the underlying structure or logic of the practices that we teach explicit to ourselves and to novices in order to intentionally disrupt common, tacit assumptions about how to do practice. This is necessary because, despite the fact that much of the practice-based teacher education literature claims that focusing on practice will improve educational equity (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009a; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013), the mechanism for how that happens is ill-defined. The assumption seems to be that more skillful enactment of some set of core practices will lead to greater equity. However, one can become skillful at enacting practices in ways that reproduce and reinforce inequity.

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doesn't have to have any awareness or intentionality to "use" a script; her behaviors can still be described and explained *as if a script were present*.

Returning to the example of leading group discussion, one could become skillful at coordinating kids' contributions. But if she coordinates kids' contributions in order to funnel them to a predetermined conclusion, or if she only ever calls on the White kids or the boys or the native English speakers, or if she asks open-ended questions that are harmful to particular groups of students,<sup>46</sup> etc., etc., then her skills will reinforce rather than disrupt educational inequity. Emphasizing "skillfulness" in practice as if it were somehow an objective, value-free feature of enactment allows teacher educators and novice teachers to sidestep the ethical implications and imperatives of the work.

Professional scripts demand that teacher educators attend closely to the *how* of enactment, to the logic of professional ethics that organizes the moves that teachers make when they enact a practice. This might show up in different ways in teacher education. In this study, I sometimes used professional scripts to define guiding principles for my own instruction, such as in the logical premises that I included in the course overview (see Appendix A). At other times, I attempted to make the professional script for assigning competence explicit to novices by framing it in terms of a goal or motivation for their enactment of practice. Examples of this include the to-do items in which novices were directed to try out an anti-racist move, or the activities that we did to develop our group definition of racism and then apply it as a critical lens to instances of teaching practice. In each of these cases, my efforts to tie the ethical motivation for the practice of assigning competence to enactment reflect my intention to help novices to

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<sup>46</sup> For example, a middle school teacher in Charlotte, North Carolina asked her students to identify reasons "why Africans made good slaves" (Anderson, 2018). This *is* an open-ended question that permits a wide range of answers and would require disciplinary skills and thinking (e.g., use of historical evidence, historical analysis) to answer. On its face, it could be used to launch a group discussion as that practice is defined in terms of skills. However, asking it upholds and reinforces racism and harms kids.



better appreciate the underlying professional logic of the practice. A final way that I used professional scripts as a design tool in this study was as a sort of heuristic to guide my own decision-making about what kinds of activities I would design and what about the practice of assigning competence I would foreground or background in my teaching. For example, the student work activity resulted from my asking and answering a series of questions to myself based on my understanding of what kind of work is involved in the practice of assigning competence and how it must be enacted in order to reflect the ethical logic of a professional script for that practice.

The idea of professional scripts as defined in this dissertation can seem esoteric and disconnected from actually enacting and learning to enact teaching practice. It's not. Teaching is an ethical, value-laden act that has real consequences for kids in classrooms every single day. When we in teacher education treat practice as if enactment hinges on skillfulness alone, we abdicate our responsibility to interrupt patterns of oppression that persistently harm kids. How we define "skillfulness" is a choice that is informed by our tacit values and assumptions about what teaching is and how it should be done. Professional scripts as a design tool requires teacher educators to make tacit values and assumptions explicit and to critically examine the patterns of practice that result. They require teacher educators to not just teach practice but to teach the ethical enactment of practice. Those are two different things.

### **Further Developing Professional Scripts for Use in Teacher Education**

More work is needed to generate concrete examples of what defining and teaching practices in terms of professional scripts can actually look like in teacher education. This dissertation was a first attempt at that work and should be treated as

such. It is always a messy process to take something from theory and apply it in real ways in the world. However, from the work I've done in this study, I've begun to more concretely identify and illustrate the relationship between the professional script for and the enactment of the practice of assigning competence. For example, in the revised decomposition (see Figure 6.3, p. 193), the connection between the professional script and visible enactment surfaces in the specification that teachers must acknowledge kids' contributions in ways that are respectful of the kids being recognized. To teach novices how to make this move in the manner suggested, the teacher educator would need to unpack with them what it means to be "respectful" given the professional ethical motivation of providing equitable opportunities to learn to all kids. The teacher educator would also need to help novices identify, unpack, and begin to enact the kinds of moves a teacher could make that would reflect respect. However, the connection between the professional script and visible enactment isn't as obvious in the other moves highlighted in the revised decomposition. One necessary step is to further refine the language of the decomposition to surface that connection so that teacher educators and novices can better appreciate how the professional ethical motivation of the practice should bound enactment.

It might also be worthwhile for teacher educators to use professional scripts to develop heuristics for novices to use as they learn to enact a particular practice. For instance, based on that same move of acknowledging kids' contributions in ways that are respectful of the kids being recognized, a teacher educator might develop a heuristic that requires novices to ask themselves questions like: "What developmental patterns are likely to influence kids' perception of what is 'respectful'?" "What are the

particular social dynamics in my classroom?” “What might I say or do to demonstrate respectful recognition for the particular kids I teach?” Questions such as these highlight the underlying logic, the professional script, that demands that novices attend to offering equitable opportunities to learn—in this case by being critical and reflective about positioning kids as valuable members of the classroom community. My working assumption is that as novices gained practice with using such a heuristic, their decision-making and moves would become more automatic and their observable enactment of practice would come to reflect the underlying ethical logic of the professional script on which the heuristic is based. Further study of teacher educators’ efforts to use professional scripts in this way is necessary to determine if this assumption bears out.

In addition, it could be helpful to apply professional scripts to another well-defined practice besides assigning competence. I selected assigning competence for this study because its existing definition—intentionally disrupting oppressive social hierarchies—aligns with what I mean by professional ethics, and so it seemed a good fit to try out teaching with professional scripts. A next step might be to apply professional scripts to the teaching of some other practice, like *leading group discussion*. Leading group discussion is relatively well-defined as a practice (TeachingWorks, 2016, 2017a), and one could imagine a number of different skillful enactments of the practice that would either support or inhibit kids’ access to equitable opportunities to learn. Attempting to apply professional scripts as a design tool to the teaching of leading group discussion could help to further clarify and concretize what professional scripts are and whether and how they are useful.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Secondary English Seminar Modules 4 and 5 Mini-Course Overview

February – April 2017  
Time: Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tues. 02/07 – 04/18, 6-8pm

Instructor: Rebecca Gadd  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: rgadd@umich.edu

#### I. Mini-Course Description

In this mini-course, we will work together to develop teaching practices that support our ability to equitably and effectively instruct the students we serve. We will engage in activities, discussions, and in-class assignments that will strengthen our understanding and enactment of professional teaching practices and that will support our ability to reflect on and learn from our own practice and the practice of others. Although we will address aspects of multiple teaching practices, the work we do will be organized around a focal practice, *assigning competence*, that has been shown to support equitable instruction in heterogeneous classrooms. I address *assigning competence* in greater detail in section IV below.

#### II. Learning Goals

- To define, identify, and analyze the practice of *assigning competence* in your own and others' teaching practice
- To develop the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to enact *assigning competence* in your own classroom
- To continue to hone your skills for reflecting on and learning from your own teaching practice

These learning goals are aligned with and support the program's key objectives for Module 4 (Motivating Students to Learn in the Discipline) and Module 5 (Teaching All Children).

### III. Logical Premises of the Mini-Course

My practice as a teacher educator is based on a set of logical premises that inform how I understand and talk about teaching, how I plan and enact instruction, and my expectations of you and of myself as professional educators. These premises are:

**(7) Inequity (e.g., racism) is built into the educational system, and teachers have a professional ethical obligation to work against it.**

There is a wealth of literature that details and critiques the inequitable structures of schooling and their consequences for marginalized students. I am happy to provide references to anyone who's interested. However, just because we must work inside these structures does not mean that we must surrender to them. It is our ethical obligation as professional educators to work against structural inequity in whatever ways we can. One way of doing this that we will explore in this mini-course is to learn how to intentionally and productively disrupt existing classroom social hierarchies in order to redefine who is "smart" and "successful" in our classes. This pushes back against the systemic cycle of low expectations → limited opportunities to learn → low achievement → low expectations that schooling inflicts on marginalized students.

**(8) Teachers have agency to act in their classrooms, and every act they engage in in their classrooms is an ethical choice.**

We have an enormous amount of power within the confines of our classrooms, regardless of the constraints imposed on us by external forces (e.g., prescribed curricula, limited access to resources for instruction, etc.). This is not an idealistic declaration. Our kids take their cues from us about things like what they should expect of themselves, of each other, and of their teachers; how seriously they should treat their own learning; whether our classes are worth their time; etc. Everything we do in our classrooms has the potential to either expand or limit their prospects. That may seem like an overwhelming amount of responsibility. However, to paraphrase many a superhero story, we can use this power for good. We're here in this mini-course to learn how to accomplish this together.

**(9) Teachers' personal experiences of schooling are a starting point for learning to teach, but they are not a sufficient basis for responsible, professional practice.**

We were all students for a long time before we became teachers, and we have watched at least a couple of dozen teachers in action over extended periods of time. Because of this, it is natural to have some ideas about what teaching is, what works and what doesn't, etc. While these ideas are a reasonable starting place for learning to teach, it is vital that we don't overgeneralize from our own experiences. What worked well for us as students may not have worked at all for others in the class. We didn't have to be concerned with others' learning when we were students, but, as teachers now, others' learning is our central concern. We must hold ourselves accountable to remaining conscious and critical of what we do as teachers, especially when we are using our own experiences of schooling as a basis for our decisions and actions. And we must hold ourselves accountable for trying to continuously improve our work with our students.

#### **IV. Assigning Competence**

*Assigning competence* is the practice of publicly recognizing a given student's intellectual contributions to the group's work with the goal of disrupting established classroom social hierarchies and expanding students' ideas of what "smart" looks like in a given subject area (Featherstone, et al., 2011). In order to effectively *assign competence*:

- (1) the teacher must be able to recognize social hierarchies in her classroom: that they exist, that they impact learning, and that she has the power and obligation to intervene on them;
- (2) the teacher must have a deep, flexible command of content knowledge; and
- (3) the teacher must design instruction to engage students in collaborative work on authentic disciplinary problems, questions, or puzzles.

The session schedule on the next page indicates the essential question that will drive each session, which "parts" of *assigning competence* that session will address, and how each session aligns with the goals of the mini-course.

**NB: Sessions 10-12 align with the program's key objectives for Module 4, Motivating Students to Learn in the Discipline/Assessing Student Learning in the Discipline. Sessions 13-15 align with the program's key objectives for Module 5, Teaching All Children and Teacher Leadership in and Beyond the Classroom. All program requirements remain in place for the sessions covered by this mini-course.**

### Modules 4 and 5 Session Schedule

Session & Date	Essential Question	Aspect of Assigning Competence	Mini-Course Goal(s)
10 02/07/17	How do we get to know students as individuals and as members of groups?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies	Define, identify, and analyze <i>assigning competence</i>  Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
11 02/21/17	How do we engage students with content?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge  Instructional design	Define, identify, and analyze <i>assigning competence</i>  Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
12 03/07/17	<b>Special Topic: Special Education</b>  How do we design effective instruction for all students?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge  Instructional design	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
<b>Assignment 4 Due 03/14/17</b>			
13 03/21/17	What does it mean to be “smart” in ELA?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
14 04/04/17	How do we <i>assign competence</i> during instruction?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Instructional design	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
15 04/18/17	How do we redesign the learning environment to support students’ competence?	Understanding classroom social hierarchies  Content knowledge  Instructional design	Develop knowledge and skills to enact <i>assigning competence</i>  Reflect on and learn from practice
<b>Assignment 5 Due 04/25/17</b>			
<b>Portfolio Exhibition 05/02/17</b>			



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Webpage for Session 4**

The following pages contain screenshots of each page I created for the online session website. The only page I omit is the assignment submission page because it contains novices' real names.

A screenshot of a web browser displaying a Google Sites page. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [https://sites.google.com/s/0B\\_OnSdR5iDiTejEybUZVXzA0UHM/p/0B\\_OnSdR5iDiTRIFDM2Vadnp6cGM/edit](https://sites.google.com/s/0B_OnSdR5iDiTejEybUZVXzA0UHM/p/0B_OnSdR5iDiTRIFDM2Vadnp6cGM/edit). The browser's bookmark bar includes links for Apps, Apple, Google Maps, UM Email, CTools Gateway, Wolverine Access, M+Box, TLE, MLibrary Proxy, Blue Jeans Network, Profile Rebecca, and Other Bookmarks. The page's navigation menu contains: Home, Assignment Overview, Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice, Reflection on Race, Racism, and S..., and More. The main content area features a dark purple background with a large white title: "Session 14: How Do We Assign Competence During Instruction?". At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with a message: "Made with the new Google Sites, an effortless way to create beautiful sites." and a floating toolbar with icons for mobile, tablet, and desktop views, along with "Create a site" and "Report abuse" buttons.

Rebecca

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Home Assignment Overview Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice Reflection on Race, Racism, and S... Multiple Abilities Treatments To-Do Item for Session 15

# Assignment Overview

There are FOUR mini-assignments for Session 14. In order to receive attendance credit for this session, you need to COMPLETE AND SUBMIT MINI-ASSIGNMENTS 1-3 BY THE DUE DATE; mini-assignment 4 is your to-do item to try before our final session together on April 18th.

Assignments 1-3 should take approximately two hours to complete all together.

**DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENTS 1-3: TUESDAY, APRIL 11th AT 8pm.**

[Assignment 1: Written reflection on to-do item from Session 13.](#) (15 min.)

[Assignment 2: Written reflection on race, racism, and schooling carousel.](#) (30-45 min.)

[Assignment 3: Multiple abilities treatment reading and practice.](#) (60-75 min.)

[Assignment 4: Trying out another anti-racist practice move.](#)

[Group Definition of Racism](#)      [Decomposition of Assigning Competence](#)      [Submit Assignments](#)

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# Group Definition of Racism

- A **construct** created by White people to **"benefit"** White people socially, politically, and economically.
- **Perpetuated by ignorance** and **upheld by an unwillingness to learn** because of perceived benefit to people in power.
- **Choice and need**—willful ignorance, Baldwin talked about people needing the system to justify, willful suspension of disbelief, **evolution from material "need" (i.e., labor) to psychic need**, makes it easier to deny and rationalize
- **Fragile state of identity**—to validate yourself you need to invalidate others
- **Veiled, pervasive system of oppression**—it's hard to point out until someone tries to access privilege or opportunities that aren't automatically given to that group
- **Innate lack of freedom within a society**—is that built into the individual or does the individual fall into that category

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# Decomposition of Assigning Competence

**Students**

- Seeing & analyzing social hierarchies
- Learning about individual students (as individuals and as members of social hierarchies)

**Content**

- Knowledge of authentic disciplinary content and skills
- Planning rich, collaborative, problem-based instruction around disciplinary content

**Techniques**

- To strategically select students
- To identify competence during instruction
- To explicitly name competence during instruction

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# Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice

Your to-do item to try out between Session 13 (March 21st) and Session 14 (April 4th) was as follows:

1. Select an area of your practice for focus: [your work with Students](#), [your work with Content](#), or [your use of pedagogical Techniques](#).
2. Consider (a) [the definition of racism that we generated as a group](#) and (b) how you think about what it means to be "smart" in your classroom.
3. Decide on ONE thing you will do *differently* in your practice between now and April 4th in order to *broaden what "counts" as smart in your classroom and push back against some part of our definition of racism*.
4. Try your one thing out and be prepared to reflect on how it went.

### Directions for Reflection

Write 2-3 paragraphs in which you reflect on what you tried and how it went. Be as specific as possible, citing evidence and examples from your practice to clearly convey what happened and how you are thinking about it. In particular, be sure to address the following:

- What area of your practice did you focus on: [work with Students](#), [work with Content](#), or [use of pedagogical Techniques](#)?
- What did you try? Why did you try that thing? What part of [our group definition of racism](#) were you attempting to push back on, and how did your attempt address it?
- How did it go? Why do you think it turned out that way?
- What does this make you think about your practice going forward?

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Home Assignment Overview Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice Reflection on Race, Racism, and ... Multiple Abilities Treatments To-Do Item for Session 15

## Reflection on Race, Racism, and Schooling

During Session 13, we held a carousel in which you all reflected on your own work with Students, Content, and pedagogical Techniques. You also had a few minutes to reflect, in small groups, on the responses to one of the charts using our group definition of racism as a lens.

Review all three charts below. Using our group definition of racism as a lens, respond to the following reflection questions (1-2 paragraphs each):

1. Who are the winners and losers in the formulations represented across the three charts? In other words, which students or types of students are advantaged and which are disadvantaged? What makes you think so?
2. What student assets/strengths do the formulations across the three charts allow teachers to uncover and honor? What student assets/strengths do they devalue and/or obscure?
3. What do the formulations represented across the three charts reflect about systemic racism and schooling? What might future researchers and critics say about us (members of this seminar cohort) as participants in this system?

**Prompt:** How do we determine which students are "high" and which are "low"? What measures do our schools provide? What are our personal metrics?

**Prompt:** What important content and skills do we try to engage kids with in our classes? How do we determine what's important? How do we offer kids to engage with important content and skills?

**Prompt:** How do we signal to kids what counts as "smart" in our classes? How do we signal to kids when they are "not" in our classes? What opportunities do we create to communicate to kids about "smartness"?

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Home Assignment Overview Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice Reflection on Race, Racism, and S... **Multiple Abilities Treatments** To-Do Item for Session 15

# Multiple Abilities Treatments

An important part of the practice of assigning competence is setting yourself up to be *able* to assign competence to students for intellectually meaningful work. One piece of this work is expanding what counts as "smart" in your classroom, which we have worked on in seminar and which you practiced in your classrooms by trying out an anti-racist move. Another piece of this work is *intentionally planning to assign competence based on the range of "smarts" that students might demonstrate during your lesson*. A useful tool for this part of the work is the Multiple Abilities Treatment (MAT).

For this mini-assignment, you will read about what an MAT is and how it fits into your ongoing instructional work. You will also practice constructing an MAT using one of your own lessons. Finally, you will critically reflect on the work you have done by once again using [our group definition of racism](#) as a lens for examining your work.

This assignment has three subparts. Please make sure to complete all three.

[Subpart A](#) [Subpart B](#) [Subpart C](#)

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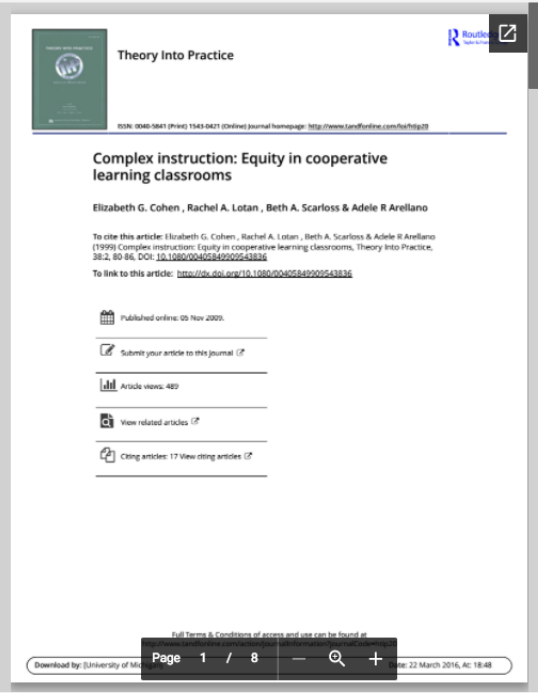
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## Subpart A: Reading

Read the article, "Complex Instruction: Equity in Cooperative Learning Classrooms"™ for more information about the practice of assigning competence and the construction and use of MATs.

\*This article comes from a journal called *Theory Into Practice*, which is specifically geared towards presenting education research in practice- and practitioner-friendly ways. It's a useful resource, especially if you have access to a university's library journal database and can access it for free.

NB: If you have a Mac, you can download the pdf, open it in preview, and use the text-to-speech function (System Preferences-->Dictation & Speech) to have the article read aloud to you. This is a good resource to share with students; it's also a good resource for teachers who may be pressed for time.



The screenshot shows a mobile PDF viewer interface. At the top, the journal title "Theory Into Practice" and the Routledge logo are visible. The article title "Complex instruction: Equity in cooperative learning classrooms" is prominently displayed, followed by the authors' names: Elizabeth G. Cohen, Rachel A. Lotan, Beth A. Scarloss & Adele R. Arellano. Below the title, there is a small thumbnail of the journal cover. The text provides citation information: "To cite this article: Elizabeth G. Cohen, Rachel A. Lotan, Beth A. Scarloss & Adele R. Arellano (2009) Complex instruction: Equity in cooperative learning classrooms, Theory Into Practice, 38(2), 80-86, DOI: 10.1080/00462489.2009.438336" and "To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00462489.2009.438336>". There are several interactive buttons: "Published online: 05 Nov 2009", "Submit your article to this journal", "Article views: 489", "View related articles", and "Citing articles: 17 View citing articles". At the bottom, a navigation bar shows "Page 1 / 8" and a search icon. A download bar at the very bottom indicates "Download by [University of Michigan] on 22 March 2016, At: 18:48".

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# Subpart B

As you learned in the article, a Multiple Abilities Treatment (MAT) is a fancy name for list of the different kinds of "smarts" students need in order to successfully engage in a lesson or classroom activity. The teacher constructs the MAT *after* planning the lesson but *before* teaching it to kids. She shares the MAT with students at the start of the lesson to communicate (a) that there are a number of ways to demonstrate "smartness" during the lesson and (b) no one individual has everything they need to complete the work (i.e., they will need to treat each other as resources in order to be successful). For this part of the mini-assignment you will practice constructing an MAT for a lesson you have *already* taught.

### Directions for Creating MAT

1. Choose a lesson you've taught recently. This lesson should be *typical* of how your lessons usually go. *Please do not pick an exemplary lesson for this mini-assignment—that will only make subpart C more difficult.*
2. Create an MAT of the different kinds of "smarts" students needed in order to fully engage in this lesson. This should comprise a list of no more than 7-10 items.
3. Copy-paste the MAT you've created and the lesson plan it derives from into your [google doc](#).

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Home Assignment Overview Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice Reflection on Race, Racism, and S... Multiple Abilities Treatments To-Do Item for Session 15

# Subpart C

Now you will critically reflect on your lesson plan using our [group definition of racism](#) and the [decomposition of assigning competence](#) as lenses.

### Directions for Reflection on Lesson Plan and MAT

1. Review your lesson plan and the MAT you constructed, paying special attention to the three areas of work identified in the decomposition of assigning competence: work with Students, work with Content, and use of pedagogical Techniques.
2. Answer the following three questions about your plan and MAT in your googledoc (1-2 paragraphs each):
  - Who are the winners and losers in your lesson and MAT? In other words, which students or types of students are advantaged and which are disadvantaged? What makes you think so?
  - What student assets/strengths do your lesson and MAT allow you to uncover and honor? What student assets/strengths do they devalue and/or obscure?
  - What do your lesson and MAT reflect about systemic racism and schooling? What might future researchers and critics say about you as a participant in this system?
3. Make sure to cite specific examples and evidence from (a) your lesson plan, (b) the MAT, and/or (c) how the lesson actually went when you taught it.

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Home Assignment Overview Reflection on Anti-Racist Practice Reflection on Race, Racism, and S... Multiple Abilities Treatments To-Do Item for Session 15

# To-Do Item for Session 15

Your to-do item to try out between Session 14 (April 4th) and Session 15 (April 18th) is as follows:

1. Select a new area of your practice for focus: [your work with Students, your work with Content, or your use of pedagogical Techniques](#). (For example, if you focused on Students last time, choose either Content or Techniques this time.)
2. Consider (a) [the definition of racism that we generated as a group](#) and (b) how you think about what it means to be "smart" in your classroom.
3. Decide on ONE thing you will do differently in your practice between now and April 4th in order to broaden what "counts" as smart in your classroom and push back against some part of our definition of racism.
4. Try your one thing out and be prepared to talk about how it went when we meet next.

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## APPENDIX C

### Sample Student Profiles and Interaction for Session 5 Case Study

As part of the case study activity in Session 5, novices were provided with the sample student profiles and small group interaction included here. I created these profiles and the sample interaction based on kids I have taught in the past; however, no real individual kid is represented here.

#### Students and Work Groups

As you plan tomorrow's lesson, you are paying specific attention to how you will support the four students in this group, both individually and as members of the group. More information about each student can be found below:

- **Dasya:** Dasya is an African-American female born and raised in your city. Academically, she is more or less on grade level in reading. However, she struggles with writing and resists help when offered. Although her writing is usually organized logically, she tends to leave out important details and ideas. She enjoys illustrating her written work, especially when she writes about the books she is reading, and you've often noticed her spending a significant portion of her in-class writing time developing elaborate drawings related to her topic. You've had some success working with her in individual conferences, but you are always careful to make sure that you conference with her away from peers and only after she has seen you conference with one or more other students. She will accept support in private one-on-one settings, but she doesn't want her peers to see her as someone who needs extra attention.

Socially, Dasya is very outgoing and popular with classmates. She is often very sweet towards peers and adults, but she also lashes out at others when she becomes frustrated. She is one of those students who always seems to be in the middle of social drama but somehow manages to retain her large and diverse friend group. You have witnessed her creativity and verbal sophistication when she is interacting with peers. She is particularly adept at insults and comebacks—several teachers have commented that they sometimes have to keep themselves from laughing when Dasya unleashes an

especially witty verbal attack. You know that some of the other teachers see Dasya as something of a troublemaker, but you have developed a soft spot for her.

Dasya's parents both work at the hospital, but on different shifts, which Dasya sometimes complains about in class. She is good friends with Destiny, and Destiny seems to be someone whom Dasya genuinely respects and looks up to. You hope that being in the same writing group with her friend will motivate Dasya for this project.

- **Destiny:** Destiny is a Latinx young woman who was born in the US and has lived most of her life in the metro area. Since the beginning of the year, Destiny has impressed you with her ability to “do school.” She is fastidious about organizing her binder and materials; she turns in all assignments on time; and she always has the most questions about the rubrics you use for grading, making sure that she understands exactly what is expected of her. However, you are concerned that while her work is always technically very good and she is a straight-A student, her assignments generally lack depth. In other words, she seems to do exactly what she needs to do to get the grade she wants but no more. You are frustrated by this because you know from her contributions in class that she is capable of much more substantive and nuanced thinking than what she usually includes in her written work.

Destiny's mother is from Honduras, and Destiny has mentioned going to visit family there each summer. You know that she speaks Spanish fluently, and she often translates for her mother at school events; but, as far as you know, she has never received ESL services in her time at your school. You were glad that Destiny opted into the immigration group because you are hoping that she will make a personal connection to the topic that will motivate her to up her game for this project. You are also hoping that the chance to work with her good friend, Dasya, will motivate her; although you've become concerned about the amount of social talk they seem to engage in during group work.

- **Mohammed (Mo):** Mo is a Black male and a naturalized US citizen. His family immigrated to the area from the Ivory Coast a few years ago. He tends to be very quiet in class and often keeps to himself. He generates creative ideas and explanations in ELA class, especially in one-on-one conferences with you. For example, he is able to generate thoughtful and insightful literary analyses of the books he reads. In addition, he is able to generate ideas orally for the various writing projects your class engages in. However, his first language is French, and he received all academic instruction in French until his family moved to the US. He receives ESL support several periods each week, but, because he is still learning to read and write in English, he struggles to get his ideas on paper, to organize his ideas, and to express himself in the ways that are valued in school. You know that ELA is something of a slog for him, but you have always known him to put forth his best effort in class and on his assignments.

Mo has a couple of close male friends in your class who are also in his ESL class. He is really into science fiction and comic books and has encyclopedic knowledge of the Marvel Universe. When you've had a chance to interact with Mo in more relaxed, social settings (e.g., on field trips, in the after school homework help program), you've observed he and his friends engage in extended and intricate conversations about the various superheroes they follow. They generate character and plot analyses and hypothetical alternative storylines that reflect Mo's and his friends' deep understanding of both the specific superhero stories they read and of comics/graphic novels and fantasy as genres.

Mo was initially more interested in being in the other immigration group (i.e., the group focused on the travel bans), but he switched to this group to balance out numbers.

You're not sure how invested he is in this group's topic. You're also not sure whether he has any social connections to the other students in the group. You know he'll do the work to the best of his ability, but you wonder how useful the group is in terms of supporting his development as a writer.

- **Terrence:** Terrence is a White male born and raised in the area. He is a bit of a mystery to you. Even at this stage of the school year, you feel like you know very little about him as either a student or a person. You feel like you've had very little success connecting with him. He rarely turns in assignments. He is generally pretty withdrawn in class, usually sleeping or staring out the window. He doesn't pull other kids off-task, and he's not disruptive; but you haven't ever seen him contribute very much to his group work. And he produces so little of his own work that you're just not quite sure what to make of him. You assume that he struggles with academics, but you have no evidence with which to back that feeling up. On a couple of occasions this year, incidents have occurred that have triggered instances of explosive anger (e.g., yelling, cursing, storming out of the room). Both times you witnessed that happen you weren't quite sure what had occurred to set him off. Because of that and because of the fact that you haven't really been able to learn much about him, you find that you tend to treat him with kid gloves and even avoid dealing with him directly as much as possible. You feel really unsure about how to approach him.

You know that he has a younger sister, who also attends the school, but neither you nor the sister's teachers have met their parents because they haven't been able to attend conferences this year. One other thing that you do know about him is that he is a huge fan of Dave Chappelle. On a field trip earlier this year, Terrence did Chappelle impressions, including entire bits from his stand-up routine, on the bus ride there and back. That's the one time this year that you felt like you got to see the real person side of Terrence, and you'd been hoping to build on that, but at this point it seems like the opportunity may have passed. He, like Mo, joined this group to help balance out numbers.

### Excerpt of Small Group Discussion

*[The following dialogue is an excerpt of a conversation you overheard while circulating among the groups during the workshop portion of class.]*

...

Dasya: It makes me think about cops shooting at black people and stuff. It's like white people be causing all these problems.

Destiny: Yeah, it's like if you not white, they think you automatically an illegal immigrant or a criminal or something. They wanna get mad and punish you for stuff you ain't even done.

Dasya: Yeah.

Destiny: And they don't care how it makes us feel, you know? Like, my mom—she doesn't have her papers, you know? But she goes to her appointments. She *always* goes to her appointments. But now we hear that's where they're arresting people! Like, *at their appointments!*

Dasya: That's messed up.

Destiny: I know, right? I told her she should stop going, but she said she has to. And I'm like, so I have to get a damn ulcer freaking out all day wondering if they're gonna arrest her or if I'm gonna have a mom still when I get home from school? They don't even care how it makes us feel.

Mo: It's the same if you have your papers too, if you're not white. Or if you're a Muslim. I am a Muslim, and I have a Muslim name. But I tell everyone to call me Mo so they won't make fun of me and call me a terrorist even though I'm a citizen now and I have my papers.

Dasya: People call you a terrorist?

Mo: Yes, sometimes.

Dasya: That's real messed up. You should put that in your essay, what you said about your name.

Destiny: We could call you Mohammed if you want.

Terrence: Aren't you supposed to be my partner?

Destiny: You never do anything, though!

...



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