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Lewis, Marcus F. *The Influence of the National SEED Project Upon Teachers' Professional Practice in a Rural, Midwestern School District*

Abstract

The United States is becoming more racially diverse, and it is imperative that PK-12 teachers receive high-quality professional development in diversity and inclusion issues to better understand the students whom they teach. The National Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project has been a prominent diversity training opportunity for PK-12 educators since 1987 and has been in operation in Black River Falls (BRF) since 2012. BRF is a small town in West-Central Wisconsin and is the context for this hermeneutic phenomenological study. There are three sub-communities discussed in this dissertation: The city of BRF, the BRF School District (BRFSD), and the Ho-Chunk Nation. Approximately 23% of the students in the BRFSD are Native American (mostly enrolled members of the Ho-Chunk Nation) and nearly 100% of the faculty are White, which means that the faculty is not necessarily representative of the students whom they teach. This study discovered that voluntary participation in BRF SEED produced transformative results in teacher participants and deepened their awareness of diversity issues. Teachers interviewed for this study described a greater willingness to infuse their curriculum with diversity-related content and reported having a better understanding of their Ho-Chunk neighbors as a result of participating in BRF SEED.

Acknowledgments

I first want to thank my maternal grandparents, Walter and Marie Lewis, for their consistent belief in me and for their unconditional love. They took it upon themselves to raise me, teach me the value of finishing what I started, and of the importance of getting an education. This journey would not have been possible without the solid foundation of support that was established in my youth and reaffirmed throughout my adulthood. Though my grandfather has walked on into the Spirit World, his voice still echoes in my mind, motivating me to do my best.

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Special thanks to a host of excellent teachers throughout the years who have encouraged, challenged, pushed, consoled, and supported me. Deep gratitude to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Urs Haltinner and Dr. Dennis Richards, for your willingness to serve and for your thoughtful feedback. Special thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Diane Klemme, for your counsel, your friendship, and for your support of my work. I am honored to be the beneficiary of your mentorship.

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Sincere thanks to my fellow Alliance Cohort members. I have enjoyed learning and

laughing with you over the past three years. We started out as strangers and have finished as friends. May you all find the successes you seek and may the wind be ever at your backs.

Thank you to my family for your support of me all of these years. Thank you to my mother and my father for bringing me into this world, thereby making possible all the events that have brought me thus far and all the future blessings that await. Thank you to my siblings, my extended Ho-Chunk relatives, and to my in-laws for the consistent and meaningful support you have given me along the way.

Finally, I have to thank my son, Walter, and my wife, Lindsey. In many ways, I feel like this accomplishment belongs more to them than it does to me because they have made so many sacrifices along the way to earning my doctorate. They were the ones who stayed home when I had class, my wife was the one who cared for our young son when I was working on my assignments, and they were the ones who truly inspired me to continue when I felt like giving up. Thank you both for making my life so much fuller than I ever thought possible.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Imagine that you are an American public school student and you feel like your teachers do not understand you or your life. They do not understand your family, or your ethnic group, or your gender identity, or your sexual orientation. Their lack of understanding does not stem from their indifference. Perhaps they have never met anyone quite like you or they have not received any professional training necessary to make you feel welcome, included, or valued. As a result of being misunderstood, you may feel like a stranger in your own classroom and experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, children deserve public schools that welcome and affirm their uniqueness. In order to make such learning environments a reality, United States PK-12 teachers need professional development opportunities geared toward creating more inclusive classrooms that celebrate and affirm human diversity (McIntosh, Style, & Flyswithhawks, 2012; Nelson, 1992).

There are many challenges that result from denying teachers access to high-quality professional development in issues of diversity and inclusivity (Banks, 1996, 2008; Bell, 1999; Blair, 2003; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995). For example, teachers may have difficulty creating a meaningful connection with multicultural students if they do not have a context through which they can understand what makes the student unique and to what extent the student's cultural experiences have influenced his/her life (Banks, 2008; Bell, 1999; Vavrus, 2002). Further, teachers who do not experience diversity training may have more difficulty creating an inclusive learning environment than their colleagues who do have diversity training experiences (Banks, 1996, 2008; Bryant, Moss, & Zijdemans-Boudreau, 2015; Vavrus, 2002).

In recent years, the United States has become increasingly diverse (Banks, 1996; Blair, 2003; Bryant et al., 2015, Central Intelligence Agency, 2017a; Ferber, Herrera, & Samuels,

2007) and it is imperative that American PK-12 teachers increase their understandings of issues surrounding diversity through high-quality diversity and inclusivity training (Banks, 2008; Bryant et al., 2015; Ferber et al., 2007). Purposeful professional development opportunities for teachers on topics such as race, privilege, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural responsiveness, and gender will be of great value during their careers teaching diverse students (Banks, 2008; Blair, 2003; McIntosh, 2012; Miller & Mikulec, 2014). Educators need to rethink what they have been taught, both formally and informally, within the context of who they are as individuals and how that translates to all students (Smith, 1999).

In general, diversity training has been a part of teacher education for decades (Banks, 2008; Bell, 1999; Chen, Cruise-Roberson, Howe, & Style, 2014; Ferber et al., 2007; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995). Since the 1970s, most PK-12 preservice teachers have been required to experience some type of diversity education in order to prepare themselves to teach an increasingly multicultural student population (Banks, 2008; Blair, 2003; Flynn, 2012; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Miller & Mikulec, 2014; Rector-Aranda, 2016). However, the lack of applicable inclusive-related education for preservice teachers necessitates high-quality professional development for current PK-12 teachers on issues in diversity and inclusivity (Banks, 2008; McIntosh, 2012; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999).

This is of critical concern because the teachers within the United States education system must have access to information designed to help them create connections with diverse students (Banks, 1996; Chen et al., 2014). Teachers should also be aware of the challenges inherent in PK-12 education that may marginalize or disenfranchise particular students in their classrooms in order to create safe spaces that can counteract historical systemic biases, such as the presentation of American history from a White/Euro-centric perspective (Chen et al., 2014; McIntosh, 2012).

Wood, Smith, and Hicks (2005) posited that if curriculum, teaching methods, and school climates were not examined, they would continue to perpetuate all of the forms of inequity and privilege that exist in the wider society.

Diversity training for PK-12 teachers is particularly relevant to this study because it takes place in a rural, Midwestern, and predominantly biracial community called Black River Falls (BRF). The population of the school district is 23% Native American, most of whom are enrolled members in the Ho-Chunk Nation, and over 70% of the district's population is White (Black River Falls School District, 2017a; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2017). Further, there are fewer than five Native American teachers in the district, which means that a majority of the Native American students will be taught by teachers who do not share their cultural or ethnic background. Therefore, the need for BRF School District personnel, especially teachers, to have training in diversity education, multicultural education, privilege studies, and inclusive education is paramount.

One of the relevant populations discussed in this study, particularly in the literature review, is the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Ho-Chunk Nation is a federally recognized Native American Nation within the United States whose students comprise approximately 23% of the BRF School District (Black River Falls School District, 2017b). Historically, Native American Nations have experienced a host of challenges related to the public education system in the United States (Buck, 2009; Fire, 2009; Guillory, 2008). For decades, public policy and federal law related to Native Americans consisted of indoctrination, separation, and assimilation (Guillory, 2008). Throughout the compulsory boarding school era in the 19th and 20th centuries, Native American children were separated from their families and taken to residential schools that sought to assimilate them into mainstream White culture (Buck, 2009; Guillory, 2008).

Compulsory boarding schools were not limited to one geographic region of the United States; they existed in various parts of the country (Buck, 2009; Guillory, 2008). In many cases, Native American students were not allowed to speak their indigenous languages, practice their traditional religions, or express their cultural identities (Buck, 2009; Guillory, 2008). In many ways, Native American boarding schools were a United States government-sponsored attempt at cultural genocide. An often-cited expression that encapsulated the mission of the boarding schools commonly attributed to U.S. Army officer and founder of the Carlisle Indian School, Richard H. Pratt, was to kill the Indian in order to save the man (Prucha, 1973).

Resultant from the boarding school experience, Native Americans have had difficulty with mainstream American education in numerous ways, including achievement, self-efficacy, and desire (Fire, 2009; Guillory, 2008; Moody, 2013). Further, many Native Americans who experienced boarding schools as children decided not to teach their indigenous language to their children, resulting in the decimation of many Native languages in the United States (Loew, 2013; Olson, 1975). The Ho-Chunk Nation, one of the communities examined in this study, experienced similar aftershocks from the boarding school era, which has resulted in fewer than 100 fluent Ho-Chunk speakers alive in 2017 (Loew, 2013). The experiences of Native Americans with public education is relevant to understanding the Ho-Chunk Nation, its relationship with mainstream education (e.g. the Black River Falls School District) today, and the reasons the National Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project exists in Black River Falls.

The National SEED Project began in 1987 as an experiment to support teachers in the design and implementation of their own professional development (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2012; Nelson, 1992; Smith, 1999). The foundational idea of SEED believes that

responding to the needs of diverse students requires educators to discuss and investigate multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches within the context of their professional development (Wood, Smith, & Hicks, 2005). SEED is a peer-led professional development opportunity for educators, parents, and communities that meets once per month over a period of nine months, parallel to the average PK-12 school year. All participation is voluntary, and no one is paid by SEED to participate in the groups.

As of 2011, the SEED Project has provided diversity training to over 37,000 educators and parents across the United States and throughout the world and has affected the education of nearly 10 million young people since its founding (McIntosh et al., 2012). The SEED experience is relatively new (approximately 30 years) and its full impact upon educators may not be known for some time, but the impact on the participants have proven to be largely transformational (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999).

The basic concept of SEED is simple. Teachers provide the leadership and direction for their own professional development using the SEED approach (Wood et al., 2005). The topics of SEED are wide-ranging and are designed to engage the participants in thoughtful reflection of their own inherent biases that may be transferred to the students through their teaching (Wood et al., 2005). The traditional SEED topics include issues related to privilege (gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.), biases, isms, access, sexual orientation, and others, through small-group discussions by educators, which are led by their peers. Smith (1999) found that teachers appreciated the SEED approach, because it took into account how they had come to know what they knew, rather than an exclusive focus on what content teachers needed to know. In effect, the experience affirmed the teachers' personal experiences as a vital part of the learning environment.

A key idea behind the SEED Project is that both professional and personal faculty

development, supported over time, are needed if schools are to enable students and

teachers to develop a balance of self-esteem and respect for the cultural realities of others

in the United States and in other parts of the world. When teachers are put at the center of

their own processes of growth and development, they can more successfully put students'

growth and development at the center of their educational efforts. (McIntosh et al., 2012,

p. 1929)

Statement of the Problem

The Ho-Chunk Nation first brought SEED to BRF in 2012 when employees of the Ho-

Chunk Nation Education Department began facilitating SEED groups for a mixture of the BRF

community, the Ho-Chunk community, and for the BRF School District teachers as a

professional development opportunity (SEED facilitator Barbara Blackdeer-Mackenzie, personal

communication, 2016). Since 2012, many teachers in the BRF School District have participated

in the SEED project. However, no research has been conducted to determine the outcomes of the

SEED project in BRF. There is a need for research designed to determine the longitudinal

outcomes of the SEED project in BRF and to explore how voluntary participation has influenced

teachers' professional practice related to multicultural education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study is to examine the

influence that teachers' voluntary participation in the SEED project has had upon their teaching

practice in the BRF public school district since 2012. This study will describe the extent to

which SEED has affected the teachers' professional practice through the lens of Mezirow's

(1978) Transformative Learning Theory. Understanding the influence of SEED upon the public

school teachers' teaching will provide district leadership/management and the Ho-Chunk Nation with information vital to shaping the future of the SEED program in BRF and inclusive professional development opportunities for educators within the local school district.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the professional practice of Black River Falls School District teachers?

2. What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced Black River Falls School District teachers to make?

3. What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the Black River Falls SEED Project?

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to make contributions to both theory and practice. From a professional practice standpoint, the need for teachers with training in diversity and inclusion will increase as the United States continues to become more diverse (Banks, 1996; Blair, 2003; Bryant et al., 2015, Central Intelligence Agency, 2017a; Ferber et al., 2007). The United States education system will benefit from more cross-cultural training for preservice teachers and from continuing high-quality professional development opportunities related to diversity and inclusion in order to better foster relationships with diverse students in their classrooms (Blair, 2003; Bryant et al., 2015; Ferber et al., 2007). This study attempts to contribute to the discussion about diversity-related professional development for public school teachers, particularly in rural areas. This information may be useful to district administrators who are in need of such training opportunities for their teachers, support staff, and school boards.

From a theoretical perspective, this study will also contribute to Jack Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformative learning. Mezirow's work has been extensively studied, elaborated upon, and debated (Cranton & Kasl, 2012; Lundgren & Poell, 2016; Mezirow, 1978, 1997, 1998, 2003; Newman, 2012; Taylor, 1997), but this study will be valuable because it used Mezirow's theory in a new context. This study used transformative learning theory as the lens to examine the influence that a specific inclusive education experience (SEED) has had upon public school teachers in a rural Midwestern community that is largely biracial, consisting mostly of White and Native American populations. A study of this kind has not yet been attempted.

Assumptions of the Study

This study is guided by the epistemological assumptions of constructivism, which is the process by which human beings make meaning from the interaction between their experiences and their ideas (Creswell, 2003; Miller, 1985). Constructivism directly informs this study because it examined the extent to which voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced public school teachers' practice. In other words, SEED participants create their own meaning from the experience, which correlates to one of the key tenets to SEED: making meaning from previous experiences and using those experiences to inform future practice (Wood et al., 2005). As such, SEED's connection to constructivist epistemology is clear.

Limitations of the Study

The qualitative research paradigm has become increasingly popular since the 1970s and has gained considerable respect in the academic world (Webb, 2016). Indeed, qualitative methods have become trusted sources of information in the social sciences, particularly education. Webb (2016) outlined several limitations common to qualitative research studies, including lack of generalizability, researcher bias, and participant credibility/honesty. Similarly,

this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study also experiences limitations that Webb (2016) described.

First, this study is highly specific in that it examines a particular professional development experience, SEED, which exists in a unique community. The BRF community is, essentially, three communities in one: the school district, the Ho-Chunk community, and the non-Native American/White community. The dynamics of the three community intersections is examined in the context portion of the literature review, but as a result of its inherent contextual distinctiveness, the findings of this study may have limited general application.

Second, this study relies on the researcher as the instrument of data collection and data analysis (Webb, 2016). Though trained in qualitative research methods, the researcher is keenly aware of the challenges and responsibilities inherent to the integrity of data presentation. The researcher fully understands that "the [study's] findings will be credible only insofar as the skill of the researcher is able to accurately develop them" (Webb, 2016, p. 83). The data collection and analysis methodology is described in chapter three of this study.

Third, the nature of this study lends itself to the possibility that the participants may not give responses that are entirely honest. However, it is hoped that the interview participants were truthful in their responses in order to provide useful, meaningful data for the study. The researcher understands that it is also possible that participants gave answers they believed he wanted to hear or that were socially and/or professionally preferable.

Definition of Terms

The terms listed in this section will be used throughout the study. In order to promote clarity, a list of definitions for each term has been provided.

Black River Falls (BRF). A rural, Midwestern community in which this study was

conducted. The community is located in Jackson County, the population of which was 20,449 in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2017a). The city of BRF has a population of approximately 3,622 people (United State Census Bureau, 2017b) living within the city limits. As of 2010, 83.4% of the population was White and 10.9% were Native American in the greater BRF community (United States Census Bureau, 2017b). However, within the city limits, 91.5% of the residents were White and 5.2% were Native American in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2017b).

Black River Falls school district. Founded in 1898, the district served 1,757 students during academic year 2015-16 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2017), and it is one of the three communities examined in this qualitative study.

Boarding school. A government-sponsored school system designed to assimilate Native American children into American society (Fire, 2009; Guillory, 2008; Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002).

Hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is based upon Heidegger's notion that an individual's consciousness could not be evaluated separately from the conditions of the world because the world is part of an individual's experiences and helps to shape their understandings of reality (Lichtman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). "Hermeneutic phenomenological research reintegrates part and whole, the contingent and the essential, value and desire" (van Manen, 1990, p. 8).

Ho-Chunk Nation. The Ho-Chunk Nation is a federally recognized Native American Nation with a constitutional government located in the United States' Midwest (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002). The Nation has aboriginal claims to the BRF area that extend thousands of years (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002). The Nation has two communities five miles outside BRF and many others throughout the state. Approximately 23% of the BRFSD are Native American with the

vast majority of those being enrolled members of the Ho-Chunk Nation (Black River Falls School District, 2017a).

Native American. A descendant from one of the indigenous inhabitants of the western hemisphere, specifically those who lived in what is now called the United States of America (Merriam-Webster, 2017). This term is used interchangeably with "Indian" or "Native" throughout the study. However, Native American is the preferred and most common use of the term.

Phenomenology. Created by Edmund Husserl, phenomenological research approach is designed to examine a specific lived experience, phenomenon, or occurrence (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2013).

Privilege. The contemporary scholarly term, privilege, was helped made popular by Peggy McIntosh in her seminal 1988 essay on the topic entitled, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; McIntosh, 1988, 2012). In general, privilege studies explore the unearned advantages specific groups of people in society possess that other groups do not (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; McIntosh, 1988; Stark-Rose, Lokken, & Zarghami, 2009). Many scholars have found that privilege, and the resultant discrimination against groups who do not enjoy the same privileges, exists at a systemic level (McIntosh, 1988, 2012, 2015; TEDx Talks, 2012).

Qualitative research. Qualitative research is an anti-positivistic, emergent form of scientific inquiry rather than a prescribed or experimental paradigm that is used in positivistic studies (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Sofaer, 1999; Webb, 2016). This type of research is the quintessential paradigm for understanding the meaning individuals acquire through their experiences, such as the SEED project, which is the

subject of this dissertation (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Sofaer, 1999; Webb, 2016).

Seeking Education Equity and Diversity (SEED). Peer-led groups that discuss diversity and inclusion issues in education, such as privilege, isms, sexual identity, institutional discrimination, etc (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2012; Nelson, 1992; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). The groups met once per month over a nine-month period concurrent with most school districts' academic years (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999). The program was founded by Peggy McIntosh and Emily Styles at the Wellesley Center for Women's Studies as a professional development opportunity for public school teachers to enhance their understanding of issues related to diversity and to examine the inherent biases they may have that are inadvertently passed along to their students (Wood et al., 2005). SEED in BRF began in fall 2012 and has continued to the present.

Transformative learning theory. Transformative Learning Theory is a lens for understanding how adults make meaning of their experiences, particularly in an education setting through a series of ten transformation phases (Daloz, 2000; Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2003). The transformation empowers individuals to transform their frames of reference through critical reflections upon their own assumptions that inform their beliefs, interpretations, habits of mind, or points of view (Mezirow, 1997). This theory is used to explore the extent to which SEED has influenced teachers' understanding about diversity issues and their professional practice.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The Ho-Chunk Nation brought the Seeking Education Equity and Diversity (SEED) to Black River Falls (BRF) in 2012. Since that time, employees of the Ho-Chunk Nation Education Department and professional staff from the BRF School District began facilitating SEED groups for the BRF community, the Ho-Chunk community, and for the school district teachers as a professional development opportunity (SEED facilitator Barbara Blackdeer-Mackenzie, personal communication, 2016). Since SEED was first brought to BRF, over 50 BRF community members, including school district teachers, have participated in the SEED project (SEED facilitator Michelle Cloud, personal communication, 2016). Prior to this study, no research had been conducted to determine what the outcomes of the SEED project in BRF have been. As a result, there is a need for research that will help determine the longitudinal outcomes of the SEED project in BRF and to explore how voluntary participation has influenced BRF School District teachers' professional practice related to education of diverse students in the public schools.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine the influence that teachers' voluntary participation in the SEED project has had upon their teaching practice in the BRF public school district since 2012. This study will explore the extent to which SEED has affected the teachers' professional practice using Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory as an evaluative lens. The author believes by gaining an understanding of the SEED's influence upon the public school teachers' teaching, district leadership, and the Ho-Chunk Nation will have relevant data to use when determining the future of the SEED in BRF.

This study has the potential to make contributions to both theory and practice. From a professional practice standpoint, the need for teachers with training in multicultural education

will increase as the United States continues to become more diverse (Ferber et al., 2007; Flynn, 2012). The United States education system would benefit from high-quality multicultural professional development opportunities in order to foster better relationships with diverse students in their classrooms. This information may be useful to district administrators who are in need of similar training opportunities for their teachers, support staff, and school boards. Further, this study also has the potential to contribute to the conversation about diversity and inclusion issues in rural education contexts, particularly school districts with high Native American populations.

This chapter will explore existing research and literature that supports the need for and the viability of this study. Specifically, this chapter builds its argument on four pillars: Transformative Learning Theory, Privilege Studies and Teacher Training, the National SEED Project, and the Context of the Study (Black River Falls, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the Black River Falls School District). This chapter will establish a chain of logic, based upon the current literature, that explains why this study is both important and timely.

First, this chapter will discuss Jack Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory because it is the theoretical lens through which the influence of SEED upon teachers' professional practice in BRF will be examined. Through a review of the literature, this chapter will discuss the origins of the theory, the theory's evolution since its genesis, and highlight the scholarly criticism of Transformative Learning Theory. By the end of this chapter, the author will have clearly demonstrated that Transformative Learning Theory is an ideal theoretical lens to use when exploring the SEED phenomenon in BRF.

Second, an awareness of privilege studies and systems of power is highly relevant to effective diverse and inclusive curriculum. Diversity and inclusion training for teachers is

relevant to this study for several reasons. As mentioned in chapter one, the United States, and indeed, the world, is becoming more diverse each generation (Ferber et al., 2007; Flynn, 2012). Teachers should be given tools they can use to make connections between their existing knowledge and the communities in which they and their students live (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blair, 2003; Flynn, 2012; Lea, 2014; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

Further, the two largest demographics in the Black River Falls School District are White (72% in 2015-16) and Native American (23% in 2015-2016), which means that more than one out of every five students that teachers in the district encounter will be from a minority group (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2017). That statistic underscores the importance of high-quality professional training in diversity education. The National SEED Project is predicated upon the exploration of inclusive curriculum, which includes thorough investigations of systemic biases, discrimination, and privilege (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2012). In general, most teacher education programs focus on the importance of diversity, but do not necessarily discuss the implications that privilege plays in systemic discrimination and lack of access (Lea, 2014; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

Third, this study will also examine the literature on the National SEED Project, including a discussion regarding the three doctoral dissertations that have researched SEED, a review of a significant, independent study about SEED commissioned by the University of Southern Maine, and a critical analysis of other scholarly publications related to the topic. Through a review of the literature, the author will help the reader understand the origins of SEED, its evolution since its creation, its influence upon educators and community members, and reveal some criticisms that have arisen about the program from its participants. By the end of this chapter, the reader will understand why the National SEED Project, and its implications on teacher practice, is

worthy of further study.

Finally, this chapter will conclude by setting the scene for the reader. Webb (2016) states that understanding the context is paramount, particularly in qualitative studies. The context portion will introduce the reader to the three communities that exist within the scope of this study. Further, the context section will demonstrate how an understanding of each community's distinctiveness is germane to answering this study's research questions. The three communities described in the context section are the city of BRF, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the BRF School District.

Theoretical Lens

There are a number of theories related to adult education and how individuals derive meaning from their experiences. However, this portion of the literature review will focus upon Jack Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory. This theory is relevant to the study because it is the theoretical lens through which the influence of SEED upon teachers' professional practice in BRF was investigated. This section will sift through the origins of the theory, discuss the theory's evolution over time, and highlight some of the scholarly criticism of Transformative Learning Theory found in the literature.

Transformative learning theory. Transformative Learning Theory was first posited by Jack Mezirow in 1978 as a means for understanding how adults make meaning of their experiences, particularly in an education setting through a series of transformation phases (Daloz, 2000; Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2003). The transformation empowers individuals to transform their frames of reference through critical reflections upon their own assumptions that inform their beliefs, interpretations, habits of mind, or points of view (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow's original theory has been widely discussed in the literature and has served as

the theoretical basis for many doctoral dissertations in adult education since the early 1980s

(Newman, 2012). Scholars have found the theory useful in articulating changes that take place

in adults as they progress through postsecondary education (Christie, Carey, Robertson, &

Grainger, 2015; Mezirow, 2003; Newman, 2012).

> Transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference - sets
> of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) -
> to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to
> change. Such frames of reference are better than others because they are more likely to
> generate beliefs and opinions that will prove [truer] or justified to guide [future] action.
> (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58-59)

Phases of transformation. Mezirow (1978) defined nine distinct phases of

transformation in his original theory and has added additional phases as he refined his theory

over time (Cranton & Kasl, 2012; Mezirow, 1991; Newman, 2012). However, in modern

practice, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory consists of ten phases (Mezirow, 2000).

The ten phases of transformation adults experience are:

1. A disorienting dilemma;

2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame;

3. A critical assessment of assumptions;

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared;

5. An exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;

6. Planning a course of action;

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;

8. Provisional trying of new roles;

9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new

perspective. (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22)

The first phase of Mezirow's (1978, 2000) theory posits that adult learners often experience

situations or information that is contrary to their existing knowledge or belief structures.

Consequently, adult learners are confronted with a choice between a pair of disparate options and

must choose between fortifying their existing perspectives or adjusting them to fit the new

information or experience (Mezirow, 1978, 2000).   The second phase employs one of the salient

aspects of Mezirow's theory, which is self-reflection. Adult learners must examine their feelings

following the disorienting dilemma, which may include shame and/or guilt (Mezirow, 1978,

1997, 2000, 2003).

The third phase is also connected to self-reflection in that it requires adult learners to

examine the assumptions upon which their prior knowledge was based (Mezirow, 1978, 1997,

2000, 2003). Phase four is an adult learner recognizing that his or her discontent is part of the

process of transforming one's own perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Phase five is the part of the

process when an adult learner begins exploring other options to resolve the feelings of

discontentment, such as adopting a new personal paradigm or further research into the topic that

caused the disorienting dilemma initially (Mezirow, 1978, 2000).

Phase six involves an adult learner deciding upon a course of action that is designed to

promote change (Mezirow, 1978, 1997, 2000, 2003). The seventh phase involves a student

acquiring the skills in order to execute the plan devised in phase six (Mezirow, 1978, 2000).

Phase eight is the adult learner trying new roles based on the plan and information in the

previous two phases (Mezirow, 1978, 2000). Further, phases nine and ten involve a modified

self-image or self-confidence in the new roles explored by the adult learner and the reintegration of those experiences into the learner's life (Mezirow, 1978, 2000). Phase ten is, essentially, the successful acquisition of a new perspective or paradigm (Mezirow, 1978, 2000).

Criticism. Though Mezirow's theory has proved useful in dissertation research, the literature is also laced with passionate dissent about the theory's validity (Newman, 2012; Taylor, 1997). One of the most prominent criticisms is that there are no empirical studies about the theory because the study is most often explored in phenomenological studies (Taylor, 1997). In addition, many researchers do not appear to continue to use the theory beyond their dissertation stage, which may diminish the long-term viability of the theory (Taylor, 1997).

Another concern regarding Mezirow's work is that there is no such thing as transformational learning; instead, some scholars assert there is only good learning (Newman, 2012). Newman (2012) argues that a challenge inherent to the theory is that the transformations cannot be verified by anyone other than the learner and that such affirmations have no guaranteed validity. "We cannot assume that people have undergone a radical change because they say they have undergone a radical change" (Newman, 2012, p. 40). Despite the criticism of Mezirow's theory, it has been used extensively in master's theses and doctoral dissertations to study phenomenological experiences and is apt for this particular study of the SEED project in Black River Falls (Christie et al., 2015).

Relevance to the study. Transformative Learning Theory is the ideal lens to examine the influence that voluntary participation in SEED has had upon public school teachers' professional practice in the BRF School District. In particular, the ten different phases of transformative learning will be especially useful because one of the SEED's goals is to engage its participants in difficult conversations related to diversity in education (Bell, 1999; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith,

1999). The conversations in SEED essentially cause the participant to experience the first phase of Mezirow's (2000) theory, the disorienting dilemma.

Through the SEED experience, participants are asked to examine their own experiences on topics such as race, privilege, systems of power, discrimination, isms, and gender identity (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005), which is representative of phases 2, 3, and 4 of Mezirow's (2000) theory. As SEED participants encounter topics that make them uncomfortable or require thoughtful reflection, they are compelled to reexamine their own identities and biases (Towery et al., 2007). The literature is replete with testimony that suggests that SEED stimulates a transformational change in its participants, which makes Mezirow's theory is ideal to examine the transformations (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005).

Application of theory. Mezirow's theory is used in this study to explore the extent to which SEED has influenced teachers' understanding about diversity issues and their professional practice. In other words, Mezirow's theory will help the researcher understand whether or not SEED had a transformational influence upon BRF School District teachers. And, if SEED did have a transformational impact, the theory will also be used to understand how the teachers actualized their newfound knowledge within their classrooms. The researcher explored the teachers' experiences through one-on-one interviews and a subsequent examination of emergent themes from the testimony. The data collection and analysis process will be discussed extensively in chapter three, the methods chapter.

Privilege Studies and Teacher Training

Privilege has become an academic discipline and a widely studied social science construct since the 1980s (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Ferber, Herrera, &

Samuels, 2007; Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988). One of the first scholars to examine the concept of privilege was W.E.B. Du Bois in his 1903 essay, "The Souls of Black Folk" (Ferber et al., 2007). In general, privilege studies explore the unearned advantages specific groups of people in society possess that other groups do not (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; McIntosh, 1988; Stark-Rose et al., 2009). Both preservice and current-service teachers would benefit from professional development about privilege in order to learn about the resultant tension, oppression, and separation effects that privilege has on educational environments (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Lacy, 2014; Lea, 2014; Liu, Pickett, & Ivey, 2007; McIntosh, 1988, 2012; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

The contemporary scholarly term, privilege, was made popular by Peggy McIntosh in her seminal 1988 essay on the topic entitled, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; McIntosh, 1988, 2012). The fundamental concept behind privilege studies is the notion that certain persons did not earn the rights and "cultural capital" (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p. 7) they have; they have those assets because they were born into a privileged group (Banks, 1996; Buchanan, 2016; Espino & Lee, 2011; McIntosh, 1988, Pinterits, Poteat, & Spanierman, 2009; Stark-Rose et al., 2009). Since McIntosh (1988) wrote her essay, the topic of privilege has become an academic discipline, a widely studied social science phenomenon, and is both controversial and polarizing in mainstream American popular culture (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blum, 2008; TEDx Talks, 2012).

Scholars have widely studied the influence privilege has had upon American society for over thirty years (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Ferber et al., 2007; Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988). In addition, social scientists have also studied the societal constructs that perpetuate privilege disparities in a variety of different contexts, including race, gender, and

sexual orientation (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Lea, 2014; Rector-Aranda, 2016). In general, a majority of scholars have found that privilege, and the resultant discrimination against groups who do not enjoy the same privileges, is overwhelmingly systemic (McIntosh, 1988, 2012, 2015; TEDx Talks, 2012). In other words, many researchers have found that privilege is supported through systems of power that work to entitle certain groups and disenfranchise others (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Ferber et al., 2007; Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Pinterits et al., 2009; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

Privilege categories. McIntosh (1988, 2012) suggested that every person has at least some sort of privilege, and thus, unearned rights just for existing or for being part of an empowered group. There are a variety of privilege categories, including, but not limited to, male privilege, heterosexual privilege, and perhaps the most commonly known and discussed, White privilege (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Ferber, Herrera, & Samuels, 2007; Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Pinterits et al., 2009; Stark-Rose et al., 2009). This section will briefly explore each of the aforementioned privilege categories and connect each category to existing research found in the literature.

Male privilege. This privilege category was one of the first discussed by McIntosh (1988) in her original essay and has since been explored by herself and other academics (McIntosh, 2012, 2015). The impetus and sponsoring notion that supports the existence of male privilege is that men have, disproportionately, controlled the world's governments, finances, religion, military, and popular culture for centuries (Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; TEDx Talks, 2012). Resultant to the disproportional male influence, many systems have been designed by men that primarily benefit men and discriminate against women (McIntosh, 1988; TEDx Talks, 2012).

McIntosh first observed male privilege in her early work as an academic while participating in a New England faculty consortium at a women's college (TEDx Talks, 2012). She interacted with many male faculty members who were supportive of incorporating women's studies into the broader liberal arts curriculum (e.g. political science, literature, music, and art), but opposed placing it in the introductory coursework in the first year (TEDx Talks, 2012). McIntosh described her surprise at her male colleague's description of women's studies inclusion into the first year curriculum as "soft stuff" that would distract students when they should focus on choosing their majors (TEDx Talks, 2012).

> Virtually all men deny that male over reward alone can explain men's centrality in all the inner sanctums of our most powerful institutions. Moreover, those few who will acknowledge that male privilege systems have over empowered them usually end up doubting that we could dismantle these privilege systems. They may say they will work to improve Women's status, in the society or in the university, but they can't or won't support the idea of lessening men's. (McIntosh, 1988, p. 2)

Male privilege is often studied within the context of sexism (Case, Hensley, & Anderson, 2014; Dowd, 2016). Indeed, the literature is replete with examples of how sexist systems maintain male dominance in many aspects of American history (Case et al., 2014; Dowd, 2016). For example, in the infancy of the United States, only White men were allowed the right to vote, hold elected office, or own property (United States National Archives, 2017). Indeed, women were not entrusted with the right to vote until nearly 150 years after the country was founded with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America (United States National Archives, 2017).

Psychologists have studied modern sexism/male privilege through the lens of behaviors

that society deems acceptable (Case et al., 2014; Dowd, 2016; McIntosh, 2012). Scholars have observed a double standard with regard to similar traits expressed in both men and women (McIntosh, 1988). For instance, a man who passionately voices his opinions is often described as poised or commanding. However, similar traits portrayed by women can be met with skepticism, questioning of motives, and profane labels (Case et al., 2014; Dowd, 2016).

Male privilege has been described as ultimately self-defeating in that it allows men to devalue 51% of the American population (women), including their own wives, children, and mothers (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017b; TEDx Talks, 2012). In her 2012 appearance in TEDx Talks, McIntosh again reflected upon her past experiences with male academic colleagues who protested in the inclusion of women's studies into the introductory liberal arts coursework, deeming such curricular intrusions as extras: "Every one of these very nice men was born of a woman. And she has become *extra* in his head" (TEDx Talks, 2012).

Heterosexual privilege. Heterosexuals possess significantly greater social capital than their homosexual counterparts (Case & Stewart, 2009, 2010; Feigenbaum, 2007; McGeorge & Carlson, 2011). As a result, scholars have found that many systems are designed to favor heterosexual persons over homosexual persons (Case & Stewart, 2009, 2010; Feigenbaum, 2007; McGeorge & Carlson, 2011). A relevant example of systemic heterosexual privilege is marriage. Until relatively recently, only heterosexuals were allowed to enter legal married unions in the United States (United States Supreme Court, 2017). Only after a long legal battle culminating in a Supreme Court decision in 2015 were homosexual couples affirmed with the right to marry in the United States (United States Supreme Court, 2017).

Further, prior to the United States Supreme Court's ruling providing marriage equality for homosexual persons across the country, only certain states affirmed the validity of

homosexual unions (Case & Stewart, 2009, 2010; Feigenbaum, 2007; McGeorge & Carlson, 2011). The lack of legal marriage prevented many homosexual couples from making fundamental spousal choices (e.g. health decisions for one another, visitation rights) and enjoying other married benefits (e.g. shared health insurance) (Case & Stewart, 2009, 2010). Those abilities were, previously, privileges only afforded to heterosexual couples in the United States. The prevalence of heterosexual privilege is objectively apparent in the social, legal, and religious fabric of the United States of America (Case & Stewart, 2009, 2010; Feigenbaum, 2007; McGeorge & Carlson, 2011).

White privilege. The most commonly studied form of privilege in the literature is White privilege (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blair, 2003, Blum, 2008; Bryant et al., 2015; Lacy, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Sgoutas, 2014; TEDx Talks, 2012). White privilege has been studied in a variety of disciplines, including counseling, education, health care, psychology, sociology, business, and others (Buchanan, 2016; Ferber et al., 2007, Kernahan & Davis, 2010; Liu et al., 2007; Pinterits et al., 2009). In general, White privilege is predicated on the notion that White persons have easier access to many different opportunities and benefits from institutionalized power systems because they were born White (Lacy, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Pinterits et al., 2009). Unique advantages resulting from White privilege include having predominantly White history overrepresented in school curricula; easily finding dolls, toys, posters, magazines featuring people of their own race; and the ability to worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking (McIntosh, 1988, 2012).

> I have come to see White privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools,

maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank

checks. (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1)

White privilege scholars have found that many are not aware that they possess the privilege they

enjoy because their perspectives have been normalized by the PK-12 education system (Liu et

al., 2007; McIntosh, 1988; Stark-Rose et al., 2009). Instead of recognizing their advantages as

products of a system designed and controlled by White men, many White Americans have been

convinced that choice is equally available to all and that everyone lives in a meritocracy that will

reward hard work regardless of inherent advantage or disadvantage (Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988,

Rector-Aranda, 2016; Vavrus, 2002). Often, the reverse is true and many "people need help in

recognizing the micro-details of the social process by which the extreme privilege of the very

few, the privilege of the some, and the alienation and oppression of many are reproduced daily"

(Lea, 2014, p. 7).

Researchers have found that White privilege is also largely tied to social class (Blair,

2003; Lea, 2014; Liu et al., 2007). In particular, some studies have described the emergence of a

subclass of White privilege called White Middle-Class privilege, which some scholars argue has

been promoted as the ideal representation of the American dream (Blair, 2003; Liu et al., 2007).

Liu et al. (2007) argued social class, classism, and privilege can lead to false impressions of

meritocracy and perceived advantage over others that impacts a variety of contexts, particularly

PK-12 education.

White privilege presents a host of challenges for the classroom teacher (Banks, 1996;

McIntosh, 1988, 2012; Stark-Rose et al., 2009). The literature shows that a majority of

preservice and current-service teachers are White, but an increasing number of their students are

not (Blair, 2003; Bryant et al., 2015). Due to the racial and potentially ethnic differences

between White students and their diverse and multiracial students, additional training is recommended for preservice teachers, current-service teachers, and teacher educators (Banks, 2008; Bryant et al., 2015).

> For many minority students today, the reality is that it is highly unlikely they will see themselves reflected in their teachers. So, as a teacher educator, one of my goals has been to prepare candidates to meet, as best they can, the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. (Bryant et al., 2015, p. 6)

The literature demonstrates that White Americans are accustomed to learning about their own culture in their classroom curriculum, celebrating their heroes, and examining history from a predominantly White perspective (Banks, 1996, 2008; Blair, 2003; Rector-Aranda, 2016). Until relatively recently, much of the PK-12 curriculum had embraced a unit-themed approach to multiculturalism and inclusion, often focusing on a particular racial or ethnic group for a week or a month, e.g. Black History Month or Ho-Chunk Awareness Week (Banks, 2008; Rykken, 2016). Students' cultures were examined for a week or a month, but were then discarded as quickly as they were celebrated. PK-12 curricula that explored racial and ethnic diversity in unit-oriented ways often had the unintended effect of producing a sense of "other" in minority students, highlighting their differences from their White classmates instead of their similarities (Banks, 2008; Lea, 2014). The lack of meaningful multicultural curriculum can have an adverse effect upon students (Banks, 1996; Lea, 2014).

> Children from alternative cultural backgrounds whose cultural assumptions and expectations conflict with the patterns of interaction promoted by the school often feel marginalized, or alienated, and they perform poorly according to the standards set by people in positions of corporate and political power who own the capital and knowledge

in society [or the academy]. (Lea, 2014, p. 58)

However, contemporary explorations of multiculturalism in PK-12 settings have embraced a more holistic, culturally responsive curriculum designed to infuse diversity throughout the entire curriculum (Rykken, 2015, 2016). Since the late 20th century, concerted efforts have been made in mainstream PK-12 education to move toward a more inclusive curriculum designed to promote multiculturalism and, consequently, diminish the influence of White privilege, though perhaps subcutaneously rather than explicitly (Banks, 2008; Rykken, 2015, 2016). Moving forward, it is apparent that the implications of White privilege upon the American education system would benefit from further examinations in a variety of intellectual, academic, and scholarly disciplines (McIntosh, 2012).

In the literature, White privilege is commonly discussed in tandem with other theoretical constructs or academic disciplines, such as Whiteness studies, multicultural education, Critical Race Theory, ethnic studies, and others (Banks, 1996, 2008; Bell, 1999). Indeed, some of the theoretical constructs and academic disciplines, such as Critical Race Theory, were developed as a response to the existence of White privilege and have helped shape the discussion around it (Banks, 1996; Bryant et al., 2015; Rector-Aranda, 2016). In some ways, Critical Race Theory provided a lens through which White privilege could be further examined (Banks, 1996; Bryant et al., 2015). Since their development, concepts such as Critical Race Theory, multicultural education, and ethnic studies have been used to provide training for preservice and current service teachers regarding inclusive curriculum and embracing diversity (Banks, 1996; Bryant et al., 2015; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Style, 2014).

Privilege studies in teacher education. Multiculturalism has been a part of education since the 1950s and has grown dramatically in terms of course offerings and scholarly research

(Banks, 1996, 2008; Bell, 1999; Blair, 2003; Lowenstein, 2009; Rector-Aranda, 2016). In teacher education, students are also required to take courses on multicultural education and inclusive education in order to complete their degree and to meet state requirements for teaching licensure (Banks, 1996, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Lowenstein, 2009). As multicultural pedagogy and diversity studies offerings have increased, the literature suggests that many teacher preparation courses have focused on issues of racial diversity on a superficial level as opposed to an exploration of privilege and its implications on the broader educational landscape in the United States (Banks, 2008; Flynn, 2012; Kernahan & Davis, 2010; Miller & Mikulec, 2014).

In many teacher preparation curricula, students are required to take very few (perhaps only one) course on multiculturalism, which may put students at a disadvantage when they are confronted with diverse students in their classrooms (Flynn, 2012; Kernahan & Davis, 2010; Vavrus, 2002). Some scholars have argued that teacher educators have not done enough to meaningfully incorporate diversity and privilege studies into the teacher training curriculum for their students (Bryant et al., 2015; Vavrus, 2002). Confronting racism and privilege in teacher training programs can provide empowering experiences for preservice teachers and may enhance their awareness of social justice issues throughout their careers (McIntosh, 2015; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Smith, 1999).

Race and racial identity has been described by many scholars as a social construct designed to place one group above another (Lea, 2014; Liu et al., 2007; Vavrus, 2002). In modern education, the term race permeates the discourse in textbooks and is presented as an accepted reality as opposed to a fluid social design (Banks, 1996; Lea, 2014; Liu et al., 2007). As such, much of the preservice teachers' training encourages students to think in terms of racial diversity in a somewhat limited scope (Flynn, 2012). In recent years, some scholars recommend

infusing the preservice teacher curriculum with more discussions of privilege as a method of providing context for racism and diversity in education (Banks, 1996; Flynn, 2012; Lea, 2014).

> Depriving students of a broader understanding of the world in which they must actually live, further debilitates students of color, allocating their racial identities to the dustbin of human awareness, and requiring them to either consciously or unconsciously deny their histories, cultures, and lived experiences of racism in order to get by in schools. (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p. 6)

Discussions about White privilege with preservice teachers have yielded compelling results in the literature ranging from jarring to cathartic (Kase, 2007; Pinterits, Poteat, & Spanierman, 2009; Vavrus, 2002). Students have reacted in a variety of ways, including anger, guilt, shame, and outright denial (Lensmire, McManimon, Tierney, Lee-Nichols, Casey, Lensmire, & Davis, 2013). The students' reactions is unsurprising, considering that the concept may be new and beyond the comfort zone of many (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Espino & Lee, 2011; Kase, 2007; Wood et al., 2005). "A course in multicultural education may be the first college course in which the candidates encounter issues of racism, White privilege, and the concept of anti-racism" (Vavrus, 2002, p. 97).

Again, many privileged persons (e.g. males, Whites, heterosexuals, non-disabled, etc.) are unaware that they are beneficiaries of privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Pinterits et al., 2009, Vavrus, 2002). Therefore, when introduced to the idea that they may have unearned rights and advantages because they are a member of a privileged group, they may experience what Mezirow (1978) described as a disorienting dilemma. Some may have constructed a reality predicated upon the idea that the United States is a meritocracy, which objectively rewards all equally, provided they are willing to work for what they desire (Lacy, 2014; Rector-Aranda,

2016; Vavrus, 2002). Privilege studies refute that idea on principle (Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Vavrus, 2002).

Therefore, an introduction to the concept of privilege (e.g. White privilege for a White person who has never heard of it) can disturb someone's world view resulting in a profound emotional reaction such as anger, denial, and guilt or shame (Buchanan, 2016; Espino & Lee, 2011). However, other research has argued that difficult conversations are necessary to move toward a stronger anti-racist teacher preparation curriculum that may be far more beneficial for future teachers' success (Flynn, 2012; Laughter, 2011; Pinterits et al., 2009; Vavrus, 2002).

Criticism of privilege studies. The topic of privilege, especially White privilege, has garnered significant criticism in the academic literature (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Lensmire et al., 2013; Logue, 2015). Much of the criticism appears to fall into three categories: privilege is a misnomer that requires more explanation and nuance; privilege is overstated and may unintentionally serve to undermine the anti-racist movement in education; and privilege studies need to be expanded to include more discussion of intersectionality. A brief description of all three major criticism categories will be described in the following section.

Privilege as misnomer. Some scholars have argued that the term "privilege" is inappropriate and does not accurately describe the concepts that privilege studies are attempting to explore (Lensmire et al., 2013). Much of the criticism in this category finds that the term privilege can have a negative connotation with students, which results in their resistance to the concept (Lensmire et al., 2013; Vavrus, 2002). An important aspect of understanding privilege requires an examination at a systems-level, whereas many newcomers to the topic of privilege may misunderstand and think of it only on an individual level (McIntosh, 1988, 2008, 2012).

Returning to the topic of White privilege, the construct can easily be rejected by White

persons who do not, personally, feel any significant advantages in their lives. For example, indigent White people may be unlikely to agree that they are the beneficiaries of any unearned advantages when they do not see any specific results in their personal lives. However, the reality is that White privilege, and privilege studies in general, describe systemic forms of advantage (e.g. mainstream PK-12 curricula focusing on a Euro-centric view of American history), as opposed to specific privileges on the individual or family-unit level (McIntosh, 1988, 2008, 2012). Scholars argue there should be a better, clearer, and more specific term that does not unintentionally overemphasize individual circumstances as opposed to the system-level advantages that privilege studies are designed to describe (Lensmire et al., 2013; McIntosh, 2012; Towery et al., 2007).

Privilege as detriment to anti-racism. In the literature, scholars also argue that privilege studies actually undermine the anti-racist movement in education (Blum, 2008; Lensmire et al., 2013). That assertion is based on the fact that privilege is such a polarizing social construct that it has the potential to inhibit conversation and action (Lensmire et al., 2013). Indeed, some anti-racist scholars conclude that McIntosh's (1988) essay on privilege often acts as a stand-in for the real topic that needs further study: White supremacy (Lensmire et al., 2013).

Many researchers have found that privilege studies are often met with various forms of hostility and resistance that ultimately subvert the anti-racist agenda (Lensmire et al., 2013; Logue, 2005; Towery et al., 2007). As earlier mentioned, professors may be less likely to incorporate privilege studies into their preservice teacher courses in order to avoid unpleasant conversations in the classroom (Vavrus, 2002). As a result, the difficult conversations may stymie a student's desire to embrace multicultural ideologies (Banks, 1996; Buchanan, 2016; Vavrus, 2002). Buchanan (2016) suggested teacher educators should engage their students in

identity exploration in hopes of moving "predominantly White preservice teachers from passive to critical empathy [for their diverse students]" (p. 150-151).

   The intersectionality of privilege.   One of the most common criticisms of privilege studies in the literature concerns the lack of discussion around the intersectionality (sometimes referred to as interlocking) of privilege systems (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Lensmire et al., 2013; Logue, 2005). People may belong to multiple privileged groups and, consequently, possess a variety of crisscrossing privileges (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016). For example, a White heterosexual male belongs to three privileged groups (heterosexual, male, and White) and may experience the corresponding privileges of each of those groups. Scholars have argued there is the need for further research into the ways in which different forms of privilege coexist within individuals and groups of people (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; McIntosh, 2012).

> Each race has its own origins and ever evolving history. No persona has a single, easily stated, unitary identity. A White feminist may be Jewish, or working-class, or a single mother. An African American activist may be gay or lesbian. A Latino may be a Democrat, a Republican, or even Black. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances. (Bryant et al., 2015, p. 4)

Another commonly underrepresented element of privilege intersectionality is that of socioeconomic status (Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016). The implications that poverty or wealth can have upon a person's life experiences are profound, which some scholars believe privilege studies do not discuss or examine in sufficient detail (Buchanan, 2016; Ferber. et al., 2007). "If we are to understand and respond to ideologies that minimize the efficacy of our [anti-racist] programs and/or attempt to challenge our legitimacy and devalue our efforts, we must embrace a collaborative, intersectional approach to the study of privilege and oppression in the United

States" (Ferber et al., 2007, p. 522).

Privilege has been studied as a social construct by academics and social scientists for decades, and it has generated both strong support and ardent opposition in the scholarly community (Banks, 1996; Blum, 2008; Buchanan, 2016; Ferber, Herrera, & Samuels, 2007; Lea, 2014; McIntosh, 1988). Further, it is clear from the literature that, though privilege studies are often discussed in the university setting, they have not yet become an integral part of teacher education programs in the United States (Laughter, 2011; Vavrus, 2002). Privilege is one of the foundational concepts explored in the National Seeking Education Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project (McIntosh et al., 2012). SEED's co-founder, Peggy McIntosh, was one of the first academics to explore and examine privilege and the systems of power that promote it (McIntosh, 1988, 2008, 2012). Therefore, a general understanding of privilege and its history is fundamental to understanding the work that SEED attempts to accomplish: promoting inclusive education for all.

Seeking Education Equity and Diversity (SEED)

The National Seeking Education Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project began in 1987 as an experiment to see whether teachers might be able to design and implement their own professional development (McIntosh et al., 2012; Towery, Oliveri, & Gidney, 2007; Wood, Smith, & Hicks, 2005). In order to respond to the needs of diverse students, educators must discuss and investigate multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches within the context of their professional development (Wood et al., 2005). "There has to be a better way to do professional development of teachers than to talk down to them and bore them to death" (Towery et al., 2007, p. 1).

SEED as professional development for teachers. The SEED experience has proven to

be transformational for thousands of teachers since its founding (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Towery et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2005). SEED founder Peggy McIntosh conceived the program to be an experience to help teachers collaborate, provide a safe space for difficult conversations, explore theory (e.g. White privilege or male privilege), and share their personal stories (Hasegawa, 2003; Towery et al., 2007). In addition, SEED also provides participants with time for self-reflection and self-exploration. Many teachers found the additional time for reflection and evaluation beneficial because they do not ordinarily take part in professional development experiences that afford them opportunities to do so (Towery et al., 2007).

SEED seminars validate the personal stories and testimony of each of its participants in a way atypical in many professional development opportunities for teachers (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). McIntosh et al. (2012) wrote about "balancing the scholarship on the shelves and within the selves" (p. 1928) meaning that teachers' personal histories and experiences are relevant to their learning as education professionals. The SEED project emphasizes an individual's story because it is believed that once teachers share their own experiences of discrimination, racism, sexism, or marginalization, they will better be able to relate to diverse students in their classrooms who may have experienced similar challenges in their own lives (McIntosh et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2005). However, participants are also cautioned about "going around sharing personal stories without thinking systemically, [which] is more 'sentimental' than substantial" (Chen et al., 2014, p. 5).

In addition to a discussion of their own stories, participants are exposed to theoretical concepts as a source of discussion and empowerment (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Topics of discussion in SEED seminars include privilege (e.g. White, male, heterosexual, etc.), gender identity, institutionalized racism, discrimination, and power studies, etc. (Bell,

1999; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Many of the theories discussed in SEED groups evolved from the scholarship of SEED's co-directors, Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style, such as American gender studies and multicultural education (Smith, 1999). SEED asks its participants to explore, discuss, and investigate many different perspectives in order to find equitable educational approaches within their teaching (Wood et al., 2005).

The SEED seminars. SEED groups meet once per month over a nine-month period concurrent with the typical PK-12 school year in the United States (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). The seminars take the form of small discussion groups, whose members can number no more than 20, in order to foster better communication and to build trust amongst the groups' members (Smith, 1999). Trust within the group is paramount because the SEED seminars examine a host of issues that are both sensitive and potentially volatile as participants are asked to explore their own unique identities and whatever personal biases they may carry, which has proved difficult for many adults (Towery et al., 2007).

SEED founder, Peggy McIntosh, strongly encourages each group to determine its own curriculum within the context of the broader SEED Project's goals of teacher awareness and transformation (McIntosh, 2012; Towery et al., 2007). The National SEED Project's leadership understands that each community and school district has unique needs with regard to inclusive education, and a one-size-fits-all approach would not work for everyone (Chen et al., 2014). "At the project's core is a fundamental belief that, if given the opportunity, teachers will inspire, motivate, and learn with one another" (Nelson, 1992, p. 67). As of 2011, it was estimated that the SEED Project had provided diversity training to over 37,000 educators and parents across the United States and throughout the world (McIntosh et al., 2012).

The SEED seminars ask participants to sit in a circle facing one another in order to

accomplish and symbolize inclusion (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Participants are discouraged from engaging in cross-talk, and the member of the group who speaks is allowed to speak without interruption (Wood et al., 2005). The rationale behind letting an individual have his or her own uninterrupted opportunity to speak is intended to promote equity amongst the group in that everyone has the same amount of time to express himself or herself (SEED facilitator Barbara Blackdeer-Mackenzie, personal communication, 2016). Equity is a consistent thread found throughout the SEED experience from a philosophical perspective, as well as in group practice (McIntosh et al., 2012).

SEED seminars encourage teachers to unlearn what they have learned about social justice and education equity in the hope of creating a better understanding that they can use in their teaching (Bell, 1999; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). The seminars are designed to be welcoming spaces where participants can share freely and actively engage in the discussions in order to get the most out of their professional development experience (McIntosh et al., 2012). Though sharing one's own experiences is considered an important part of the SEED experience, greater emphasis is placed upon listening to the stories of the other participants and acknowledging each participant's individual truth (Wood et al., 2005).

In addition to equity, the concept of social justice is fundamental to the National SEED Project's agenda (McIntosh et al., 2012; Nelson, 1992; Smith, 1999). The National SEED Project encourages teachers to be agents of equity in their classrooms, and the program engages them in thoughtful discourse about issues related to diversity and inclusion (Nelson, 1992; Wood et al., 2005). When teachers explore their own biases, preconceived notions, and internalized ideas about race, privilege, sexuality, homophobia, discrimination, etc., they will be better equipped to handle those issues in their classrooms (Wood et al., 2005).

Through a series of critical reflective practices, SEED invites teachers to explore how

they see themselves, to see how this self-perception informs how they know and act, and

to commit to knowing and acting in ways more inclusive of cultural and gender diversity

in their classroom, and ultimately society at large. (Smith, 1999, p. 29)

SEED leaders. Each seminar is facilitated by a facilitator who has been trained at the

week-long SEED leader institute that takes place each summer (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003;

McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). SEED leaders are trained in techniques

of facilitation and experience an intensive exploration of SEED's purpose, mission, and history

(Bell, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Prospective SEED leaders must apply to the new leader institute

and will be invited to participate only if their application is accepted (Bell, 1999; Wood et al.,

2005). Typically, new SEED leaders have already been participants in SEED groups and are

sponsored by an organization (e.g. a school district) who pays a stipend to the National SEED

Project in order to attend (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999).

SEED leaders are tasked with a multitude of duties including facilitation, designing the

seminar curriculum, coordinating logistics, and creating a welcoming environment for all

participants (Bell, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). A facilitator's goal is not to win over participants

through argumentation, but rather to promote respectful conversation amongst colleagues who

are all interested in diversity and equitable education (Wood et al., 2005). Once SEED leaders

are trained, they return to their home communities and recruit new SEED members in order to

continue the conversation (Wood et al., 2005). Throughout the process, SEED leaders come to

realize people and schools develop at different speeds and that they must accommodate many

kinds of learning styles (Towery et al., 2007).

In addition to well-trained SEED facilitators, there is a need to develop a healthy working

relationship between SEED and district administration (Towery et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2005). Financially, there is a cost to host the monthly seminars, and there is also a fee required to send people to the SEED new leader training each summer (Bell, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). In addition to the financial support involved with the facilitation of the meetings, district administrators are also important in recruiting teachers, support staff, and community members to participate in the SEED seminars (Wood et al., 2005). The ideal circumstance is when district leadership (principals, superintendent, and school board members) join a SEED seminar and demonstrate, by example, the importance of multicultural competency in the public schools and encourage others to participate (Wood et al., 2005).

Related studies. There have been very few significant social science studies conducted about the National SEED Project to date. The author of this study was only able to find three doctoral dissertations and one independent study of importance on the National SEED Project. The studies have focused on a variety of different groups and settings, including a group of African American women in Minnesota and a public school district in California. SEED has also been examined through several different lenses, such as transformative leadership, teachers-as-leaders, and a study to determine SEED's effectiveness overall. Despite the disparate locations, participant demographics, and lenses of evaluation, the studies all appear to find similar outcomes: SEED is transformational for a majority of its participants (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005).

African American women as leaders in Minnesota Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity Project. Bell's (1999) study sought to examine the experience of African American women in Minnesota who had participated in SEED seminars. Her qualitative study focused on the respondent's personal transformations through SEED. Bell's (1999) study was written in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree at the University of Minnesota.

In the results portion of her study, Bell (1999) found that SEED promoted internal and external transformations within those she interviewed. She found that many women believed SEED groups helped them create a sense of community within their classrooms and "actual classroom structural and environmental changes resulted" (Bell, 1999, p. 115). Respondents also indicated that the SEED process made them feel validated and important through the telling of their own stories. The individual contributions of the seminar participants created a synergy that brought forth meaningful conversations that encouraged respondents to strive for more inclusive teaching styles (Bell, 1999).

Her study seemed to demonstrate the transformational power of the SEED experience for teachers. In her recommendation section, she encouraged others to continue working toward social justice, equity, and inclusion in public education. She wrote:

> The cost of voicelessness and marginalization is to lose the essence and kernels of rich and meaningful experiences and stories to learn, unlearn, and relearn from and to value. Through reflection and development of authenticity of self through validation of one's experiences is needed. To be successfully engaged in doing diversity work is intricately connected to establishing a true self in order to impact others genuinely. (Bell, 1999, p. 123)

Transformative professional development: Discovering teachers' concepts of politicized classroom practice. Smith's (1999) study was a qualitative examination of SEED's usefulness as a multicultural professional development opportunity for teachers. As a previous SEED participant, Smith was also motivated to write her dissertation about multicultural issues because,

as a black child, she did not "see herself" (Smith, 1999, p. 3) in her elementary curriculum in books such as *Fun with Dick and Jane*. Smith's (1999) dissertation was written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Harvard University.

The author described SEED as a series of monthly seminars designed to engage the participants in dialogue on topics related to multicultural and inclusive education (Smith, 1999). The seminars ask participants to share their own personal stories related to the topics in the hope that their serial testimony will promote learning. As such, one of the study's most important findings was that teachers' perspectives shape the way they view the world and thus how they interact with their students (Smith, 1999).

Smith's (1999) study found the SEED experience to be transformational for the 11 teachers she interviewed. She also found that the traditional apolitical approach to the presentation of knowledge in schools and the omission of dialogue related to issues of sexuality, gender identity, racism, power systems, etc., necessitates the existence of SEED (Smith, 1999). Therefore, for SEED to work, it is necessary to reevaluate and disregard conventional approaches to teaching in order to connect with students because inclusive education is both a political and relational act (Smith, 1999).

The teacher leader role shift: A constructive developmental study of teacher leaders' experiences of role transition and authority relationships. This qualitative study was unique amongst the three SEED dissertations to date in that it examined SEED from the perspective of teacher-leaders. Primarily, the study focused on the ways in which teachers take on more administrative and education leadership responsibilities in PK-12 settings. Secondarily, the dissertation discussed how SEED participation can provide a valuable leadership experience for public school teachers. Hasegawa's (2003) study was written in partial fulfillment of the Doctor

of Education degree at Harvard University.

Hasegawa (2003) examined the experiences of nine SEED participants through the use of subject-object interviews and open-ended interviews. The primary theory used in Hasegawa's (2003) study was Robert Kegan's Constructive Developmental Theory. Secondarily, the study also examined the data through the lens of Internal Models of Authority. Kegan's theory provides a way to examine the ways adult learners perceive themselves and others throughout their lives (Hasegawa, 2003). Internal Models of Authority explores power structures within organizations and examines why certain individuals are given power and others are not (Hasegawa, 2003).

The study found that SEED helped prepare educators to take leadership roles within their work environments (Hasegawa, 2003). Further, Hasegawa (2003) found the effects of SEED participation were significantly useful and proved to be substantively transformational for the respondents. The results of the study, in general terms, do not offer significant contributions to understanding the SEED Project as a whole. Rather, this study's value is in that it explores SEED as a leadership and professional development opportunity for teachers.

SEED in Elk Grove. This study examined the influence SEED had upon a school district in the Sacramento Valley region of California (Wood et al., 2005). In 2005, Elk Grove Unified School District served approximately 56,000 students (20% of whom were English Language Learners), consisted of 54 schools, and had students from 92 different countries (Wood et al., 2005). In other words, Elk Grove Unified School District was a multicultural, multiethnic gold mine. The study was commissioned by the Collaborative Inquiry and Development group at the University of Southern Maine.

Elk Grove Unified School District embraced the SEED Project because of the unique

multicultural needs of its population (Wood et al., 2005). In 2005, the district had over 100

trained SEED leaders and nearly 2,000 seminar participants since 1997. The general consensus

from the study found that SEED produced positive results in the district overall (Wood et al.,

2005).

> We found SEED to be one of the most effective, empowering, and cost-effective forms of
> professional development we have witnessed for practicing teachers. Over the past five
> years, over 1,500 Elk Grove educators have devoted literally tens of thousands of
> volunteer hours to improving both how they think about their own identities and practices
> and the learning lives of children. We observed that the merger of hard work and a
> hopeful heart helps SEED create special conditions for powerful learning for adults and
> children. (Wood et al., 2005, p. 41)

Despite the overall positive results of the study, there were a few instances in which SEED

participants described negative feelings as well. For example, some of the topics explored, such

as White privilege, made seminar participants uncomfortable. Other discussion topics (e.g.

gender identity and sexual orientation) clashed with some seminar participants' personal

religious beliefs, which created dissonance within the group (Wood et al., 2005). Some

participants felt like they could not express their own ideas because the ideas were contrary to

the majority of the group, so they feared they would be ostracized if they shared their

perspectives (Wood et al., 2005). "The work of SEED requires seesawing between comfort and

discomfort, security and insecurity, knowing and not knowing. It is a matter of constant

negotiation and change" (Wood et al., 2005, p. 19).

SEED summary. The relationship between the number of teachers, administrators,

parents, and community members who have participated in SEED groups and the number of

studies conducted about the National SEED Project is disproportional. To date, there have only been three doctoral dissertations and one independent study of significance written about SEED. However, common themes found throughout all of the studies have been that SEED provides individuals with a meaningful opportunity to share their own experiences related to multiculturalism and inclusive education, and also that the SEED seminars have produced positive transformations for a majority of its participants (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). This study will add to the growing body of research on SEED in that it focuses on a community unlike any other in the existing literature: the transformative experiences of PK-12 teachers within a rural, Midwestern school district with a high population of Native American students.

Context of the Study

The following section will discuss the contextual setting in which this study takes place: a unique three-community, largely biracial town in the Midwest.

Black River Falls, Wisconsin. The city of Black River Falls is important to this study because it is one of three communities affected by the Seeking Education Equity in Diversity (SEED) Project that has existed in the Black River Falls community since 2012. This study is attempting to determine what influence, if any, that voluntary participation in the SEED Project has had upon Black River Falls School District teachers' professional practice. Black River Falls is the first contextual community relevant to this study.

About the community. Black River Falls is a rural town in West-Central Wisconsin and is the setting of this study. The community is located in Jackson County, the population of which was 20,449 in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2017a). The city of BRF has a population of approximately 3,622 people living within the city limits (United State Census

Bureau, 2017b). As of 2010, 83.4% of the population was White and 10.9% were Native

American in Jackson County (United States Census Bureau, 2017b). However, within the city

limits, 91.5% of the residents were White and 5.2% were Native American in 2010 (United

States Census Bureau, 2017b).

Demographically, the median age in Jackson County, including BRF, was 42.5 years, the

median household income is $44,699, and the unemployment rate was 4.6% in 2015 (Black

River Country, 2017). The community is home to many industries, including manufacturing,

casino gaming, small businesses, and many chain restaurants (e.g. Perkins, Hardee's,

McDonalds, Arby's, Culver's, etc.) (Black River Country, 2017). The largest employers in

Jackson County include the Ho-Chunk Nation, Millis Transfer, Black River Memorial Hospital,

Jackson County Corrections, and Lunda Construction (Black River Country, 2017). From an

education standpoint, 86.4% of residents earned at least a high school diploma, 13.9% earned a

baccalaureate degree, and 4.3% earned a graduate degree (Black River Country, 2017).

Historic perspective. Black River Falls was founded by Jacob Spaulding (1810-1876) in

1839 as a timber town on the Black River (Merrill, 1933; Rykken, 2010). By 1852, the town had

grown to include a doctor, a few merchants, and two hotels (Merrill, 1933). In the 19th century,

many of Jackson County's children attended rural schools in the district. By 1907, there were

over 100 rural schools in the county (Hembd-Steele & Brieske, 1997). In 1871, the city of Black

River Falls opened its first public school, Union High School, thus beginning the city's first

attempt at public education, which will be elaborated upon later in this section (Hembd-Steele &

Brieske, 1997; Rykken, 2010).

The Ho-Chunk Nation. The Ho-Chunk Nation is important to this study because of its

role in the Black River Falls community and the Black River Falls School District. There are

over 1,000 enrolled Ho-Chunk members living in Jackson County and Ho-Chunk students

comprise 23% of the school district's student population (Black River Falls School District,

2017a). This study attempted to determine what influence, if any, that voluntary participation in

the SEED Project has had upon school district teachers' professional practice, which relates to

the Ho-Chunk Nation in two important ways. The Ho-Chunk Nation initially brought SEED to

the Black River Falls School District and community in 2012, and Ho-Chunk students are the

largest minority segment of the school district. Both realities highlight the importance of and

need for diversity and inclusive professional development opportunities for teachers, which is

why the Ho-Chunk Nation is the second contextual community relevant to this study.

>   ***About the Ho-Chunk Nation.*** The Ho-Chunk Nation is a sovereign Native American

Nation in Wisconsin with its headquarters located in Black River Falls (Loew, 2013; Lurie,

2002). The Ho-Chunk Nation has over 7,000 enrolled members, operates six gaming facilities,

owns five convenience stores, and employs over 3,000 people in Wisconsin, Illinois, and

Minnesota (Ho-Chunk Nation Public Relations Officer, Collin Price, personal communication,

2017). The Ho-Chunk Nation initially gained federal recognition in 1963 as the Wisconsin

Winnebago, but later changed their name back to Ho-Chunk (the name they have always called

themselves) with the adoption of their new constitution in 1994 (Jones, Schmudlach, Mason,

Lonetree, & Greendeer, 2011; Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002; White Eagle, 1983).   Long before the

Ho-Chunk owned and operated businesses, their ancestors had ancient connections to Western

Wisconsin (Jones et al., 2011; Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002; White Eagle, 1983).

>   ***Origin story and culture.*** The Ho-Chunk People's origin story begins at Red Banks,

called Moga Shooch in the Ho-Chunk language, but their aboriginal territory extended from

upper Michigan to southern Wisconsin (Funmaker, 1986; Jones et al., 2011; Loew, 2013; Radin,

1990). The name Ho-Chunk can be translated as either People of the Big Voice or People of the

Sacred Language and is indicative of the Ho-Chunks' belief that they are the progenitors of what

linguists now call Siouan Languages (Funmaker, 1986; Loew, 2013). Ho-Chunk oral traditions

tell that the other tribes in the Siouan Language family (e.g. the Oto, Iowa, Missouri, etc.) are

actually descendants of the Ho-Chunk People; those assertions are also supported by the oral

traditions of many other tribes (Funmaker, 1986; Loew, 2013; Radin, 1990).

The Ho-Chunk People are divided into 12 social groups called clans that are organized

into two groups: sky clans (eagle, pigeon, hawk/warrior, and thunderbird) and earth clans (bear,

wolf, water spirit, deer, elk, buffalo, snake, and fish) (Funmaker, 1986; Radin, 1990; Sherman,

1998). The peace chief is selected from the thunderbird clan and is the chief for the entire tribe,

but the peace chief does not rule in the manner of European royalty, such as a monarch. Instead,

"tribal members expect their chiefs to be generous and to put the interests of the community

above their own interests" (Loew, 2013, p. 10).

Loew (2013) describes ancient cave art located in Western Wisconsin that can be

attributed to the Ho-Chunk People, which tells the story of Red Horn who was one of the tribe's

most important heroes. In Loew's (2013) opinion, the fact that the story of Red Horn is still

widely known amongst the tribe "testifies to the enduring power of the spoken word and [the]

persistence of Native American oral traditions" (p. 1). In addition to the powerful impact of oral

traditions, the Ho-Chunk have also been involved in many pivotal moments in Wisconsin's

written history as well (Funmaker, 1986; Olson, 1975; Radin, 1990; Sherman, 1998).

The Ho-Chunk greeted French explorer Jean Nicolet when he first arrived in the Green

Bay area in 1634 (Funmaker, 1986; Loew, 2013; Olson, 1975; Radin, 1990; Sherman, 1998).

The Ho-Chunk traded extensively with the European settlers over the next two centuries as more

Whites moved into their territories (Funmaker, 1986; Radin, 1990). However, despite many years of trade with European settlers, one of the most important and traumatic events in all of Ho-Chunk history took place in the early 19th Century: the removals (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002; Olson, 1975; Radin, 1990; Rykken, 2015).

     The Ho-Chunk removals. The Ho-Chunk People were forcibly removed from their aboriginal lands multiple times, and the removals have had significant impacts upon its members that can still be felt today (Jones et al., 2011; Lurie, 2002; Olson, 1975; Radin, 1990; Rykken, 2015). President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law in 1830, which was designed to impact tribes in the southern United States, but the implications of the law extended far beyond that (Loew, 2013). By 1830, the Ho-Chunk people had already signed their first land cession treaty with the federal government in which they relinquished claims to territories in Southwestern Wisconsin (Henning Garvin, former Ho-Chunk Nation Executive Director of Heritage Preservation, personal communication, 2016). In 1837, members of the Ho-Chunk signed what proved to be the final land cession treaty that greatly reduced the amount of Ho-Chunk lands left in Wisconsin (Henning Garvin, former Ho-Chunk Nation Executive Director of Heritage Preservation, personal communication, 2016).
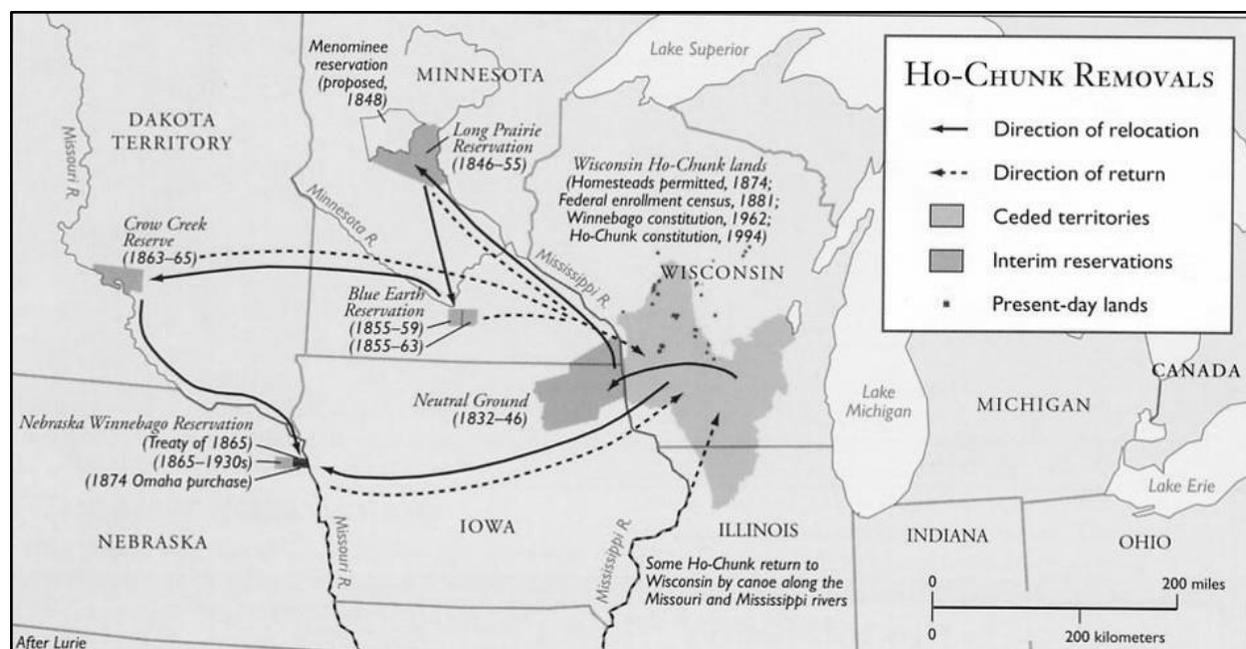
Figure 1. A map that describes the major removals of the Ho-Chunk (then Winnebago) People in the 19th Century from their aboriginal homelands in Wisconsin. Image from "First Nations Ethnohistory 374: Ho-Chunk and Ethnic Studies" (2017, April 16). Map originally created by Dr. Zoltan Grossman.

The Ho-Chunk People were removed from Wisconsin, by force, in 1832, 1840, 1846, 1848, throughout the 1850s, 1863, and 1865, to various foreign locations such as Minnesota, the Dakota Territory, Iowa, and Nebraska (Henning Garvin, former Ho-Chunk Nation Executive Director of Heritage Preservation, personal communication, 2016; Lurie, 2002; Rykken, 2015). It is important to understand that when the words "by force" are used; it means more than a stern warning or a legal notice: it means by gunpoint at the hands of the United States Army. Ho-Chunk People were rounded up and removed at gunpoint from their homelands and, in some cases, loaded onto trains to be taken to reservations west of Wisconsin (Lurie, 2002).

However, despite their forcible removals, the Ho-Chunk came back to Wisconsin each time by either walking or canoeing (Loew, 2013). The last removal in 1865 placed the Ho-

Chunk on a reservation in Nebraska, and by 1874, 650 of the 1,000 Ho-Chunks had gone home

to Wisconsin (Loew, 2013). The Ho-Chunks who remained in Nebraska became known as the

treaty-abiding Ho-Chunks, while the ones who came back to Wisconsin were the "renegades or

[the] rebel faction" (Loew, 2013, p. 49-50). According to a former teacher at the Winnebago

Indian Mission School:

> Of all the Indian tribes in America, probably none has been more ill-treated, more
>
> neglected or is so degraded in morals and ideals as the [Ho-Chunk] tribe. Of the treaties
>
> made with this tribe in the past century, every [treaty] has been violated. This record of
>
> crime committed by Christian people against a helpless, well-behaved tribe is calling for
>
> our help now. (Olson, 1975, p. 68)

Throughout the difficult removal period, the Ho-Chunk People had a few prominent allies in the

fight to keep their homelands, including Black River Falls founder, Jacob Spaulding (Rykken,

2010, 2016). Indeed, Spaulding attempted to delay the removal of the Ho-Chunk through a

variety of tactics, such as letter writing campaigns with help from local citizens. Spaulding also

wrote letters to then-President Ulysses S. Grant, visited with then-Wisconsin Governor

Cadwallader Washburn, took trips to Washington, D.C., and made several fact-finding trips to

Nebraska in order to visit the displaced Ho-Chunk (Rykken, 2010). "It is clear...that [Spaulding]

was largely responsible for convincing authorities to allow Wisconsin Ho-Chunk to be eligible

for homesteads, thereby enabling them to remain in the state" (Rykken, 2010, p. 6). When

Spaulding died in 1876, his funeral procession was led by 40 Ho-Chunk men who escorted the

casket to the cemetery, which was highly unusual at the time, and signified the tremendous

respect Spaulding had amongst the Ho-Chunk (Rykken, 2010).

Eventually, the government stopped trying to remove the Ho-Chunk People from

Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk began to reestablish their land base (Lurie, 2002; Olson, 1975; Radin, 1990). According to Loew (2013), the Ho-Chunk Nation's land base started with 40 acres of swampland purchased near Black River Falls. The establishment of a land base was paramount to the Ho-Chunk earning federal recognition in 1963, and many Ho-Chunk members still believe that the lack of a contiguous land base is one of the Ho-Chunk Nation's greatest challenges today (Loew, 2013).

The Ho-Chunk and gaming. Undoubtedly, the advent of gaming has transformed the Ho-Chunk Nation perhaps more than any other single event in the 20th century (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002). Reservation gaming started in Florida in 1979 with bingo and eventually spread throughout Indian Country as a unique opportunity for Native American economic development (Lurie, 2002). In 1988, the United States Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which provided regulations for different gaming, including table games and slot machines (Lurie, 2002).

The Ho-Chunk began their gaming experiment with bingo in the Baraboo/Wisconsin Dells area in the 1980s (Lurie, 2002). From there, the Ho-Chunk Nation created gaming facilities near other Ho-Chunk communities in Wisconsin, including Black River Falls, Nekoosa, and Madison (Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin, 2017). In the early 2000s, the Ho-Chunk Nation also opened two ancillary sites in Tomah and Wittenberg as allowed in the tribe's gaming compact agreement with the state of Wisconsin (Collin Price, Ho-Chunk Nation Public Relations Officer, personal communication, 2017). In 2016, the Ho-Chunk Nation Legislature approved a multi-million dollar plan to expand the gaming facilities in Wisconsin Dells, Black River Falls, and Wittenberg to generate more revenue for the tribe's operations (Collin Price, Ho-Chunk Nation Public Relations Officer, personal communication, 2017).

The Ho-Chunk Nation government. The Ho-Chunk Nation adopted its current constitution in 1994, both reclaiming its ancient name (Ho-Chunk) and establishing a four-branch system of government. The four branches of the Ho-Chunk government include the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and the General Council. Each branch will be briefly discussed in subsequent sections and will highlight relevant powers and responsibilities of each branch.

The Executive Branch is the largest branch of the Ho-Chunk government and is similar to the United States Executive Branch. The President of the Ho-Chunk Nation is the highest official in the Executive Branch and is elected to a four-year term. The President has the authority to nominate qualified persons to his cabinet to serve as Executive Directors, which are analogous to Department Secretaries in the United States government. The Executive Directors are subject to confirmation by the Ho-Chunk Legislature and are responsible for administering the 12 departments of the Ho-Chunk Nation: Administration, Business, Education, Health, Heritage Preservation, Ho-Chunk Housing and Community Development Agency, Housing, Justice, Labor, Personnel, Social Services, and Treasury. The Executive Branch employs more people than any other branch in the Ho-Chunk Nation government.

The Legislative Branch of the Ho-Chunk Nation is vested with the responsibility to make laws, codes, ordinances, resolutions, and statutes according to the Ho-Chunk Constitution. The Legislature consists of 13 representatives who are chosen from five geographical districts inside and outside the state of Wisconsin. Each representative serves a four-year term and cannot serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. From amongst its membership, the legislature selects a Vice President of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

The Judicial Branch of the Ho-Chunk Nation is responsible for interpreting the laws of the Ho-Chunk Nation according to the Ho-Chunk Constitution. The branch consists of three

courts: The Supreme Court, the Trial Court, and the Traditional Court. The Supreme Court and the Trial Court function in capacities similar to the United States Supreme Court and Circuit Courts, respectively. However, the Traditional Court is not established in the Ho-Chunk Constitution, but exists as a unique part of the Judicial Branch.

The purpose of the Traditional Court is to rule on matters of Ho-Chunk tradition and custom and provide guidance when asked. The Traditional Court consists of only men, which is consistent with the Ho-Chunk culture's patrilineal customs (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002). In addition, a member of each clan is sought to join the Traditional Court, as well as a member of the Native American Church. It is expected that members of the Traditional Court should be able to speak the Ho-Chunk language fluently.

The General Council is the largest branch of the Ho-Chunk government, as it consists of all eligible voting members aged 18 years and older. The concept of the General Council harkens back to the Ho-Chunk's direct democracy they experienced for generations as a tribe. The idea is that every person has both voice and vote in determining the direction of the Ho-Chunk Nation. The General Council meets at least once per calendar year and requires 20% of the eligible voters of the Ho-Chunk Nation to constitute a quorum for its meeting.

The Ho-Chunk and mainstream education. The Ho-Chunk have had largely negative experiences with Western education stemming primarily from the compulsory attendance at government boarding schools and parochial schools (Loew, 2013; Lurie, 2002; Olson, 1975; Sherman, 1998). Children were sent to distant boarding schools and were not allowed to speak Ho-Chunk, wore military-style uniforms, and learned the basics of reading and writing (Lurie, 2002). As Guillory (2008) wrote, "The majority of board schools could be characterized as a system of forced acculturation, as many Indian children were taken from their families and thrust

into a repressive, militaristic work environment…" (p. 15).

Many Ho-Chunk students in Western Wisconsin attended schools specifically designed for them in Black River Falls, and were later relocated to Neillsville, (1878-1921), Wittenberg (1884-1950s), and Tomah (1893-1925) (Lurie, 2002; Rykken, 2015). The Tomah Industrial School was a government-operated boarding school that was intended to teach Ho-Chunk students useful trades in order for them to find employment after they graduated (Rykken, 2015). The schools at Black River Falls and Wittenberg were religious schools that introduced Ho-Chunk students to Christianity and Western beliefs (Lurie, 2002; Rykken, 2015). At both the secular and religious schools, the students were forbidden to speak the Ho-Chunk language (Loew, 2013; Rykken, 2015). According to Tofoya and Del Vecchio (1996):

> Native American children, parents, and tribes were not given a choice or a voice in the matter of the education of Indian children. The aim of this system was twofold: (1) remove all traces of Indian from the child, and (2) to immerse the child totally in Western culture, thought, and tradition. In this way the Indian problem would be solved by raising the children in a Western civilized manner and away from their wanton savage ways. (p. 50)

However, not all experiences with boarding schools were inherently negative because some children were sent to boarding schools voluntarily by their parents. Marie Lewis (b. 1940), is a Ho-Chunk elder who attended an Indian Boarding School because her parents wanted her to learn the ways of the White People (Marie Lewis, Ho-Chunk elder, personal communication, 2017). She recalls stories of how she was not allowed to speak Ho-Chunk, but her parents were allowed to visit her at school and take her home for weekends, if they wished. She said it was her parents' hope that her schooling would provide her with opportunities that they could not

(Marie Lewis, Ho-Chunk elder, personal communication, 2017). In addition to her experiences, other positive scholastic experiences would soon develop for Ho-Chunk students in the Black River Falls area (Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2015).

The Black River Falls school district. The school district is important to this study because its teachers are the focus of the research questions. This study is attempting to determine what influence, if any, that voluntary participation in the SEED Project has had upon school district teachers' professional practice. This section will provide a brief historical overview of the district, discuss its relationship with the Ho-Chunk Nation, and conclude with a snapshot of the district in 2017. The school district is the third contextual community relevant to this study.

Black River Falls is located in Jackson County, Wisconsin, and the first county public school was established in the 1860s, as small rural schools became the primary form of education for Jackson County children (Hembd-Steele & Brieske, 1997; Rykken 2015). By 1907, there were 123 rural schools in Jackson County until there was a concerted effort to integrate into larger schools in 1949 (Hembd-Steele & Brieske, 1997). The one-room schools experienced a great deal of variation in class sizes, including an entire school population being less than 10 in some cases (Hembd-Steele & Brieske, 1997).

The Hochungra School at the Indian Mission. One of the rural schools was an experimental day school at the Indian Mission, located seven miles east of Black River Falls (Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2010, 2016). The school was considered experimental because the concept was somewhat new with regard to Native American education (Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2010, 2016). Previously, Native American students were sent to distant boarding schools, but that changed in the 1930s with the Hochungra Day School (Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2010, 2016).

The school was an attempt to see if "mothers would send their children to a school in their own community" (Olson, 1975, p. 4). The school was ultimately open more than 30 years; and, for much of that time, it had one teacher who would prove to be a prominent figure in Ho-Chunk's views on public education, Emma Olson (Rykken, 2010, 2016).

In her book entitled, *My Years in the Winnebago School and Community*, Olson (1975) shares extensively about her experiences working with Ho-Chunk students. She served as teacher from 1935 until the school's closing in 1963 (Olson, 1975). She admits that she did not have many experiences with Native Americans prior to her appointment as teacher of the Ho-Chunk school, and she was apprehensive about taking the position (Olson, 1975). However, over the next three decades, she helped transform an entire community's understanding of Western education, taking it from a decidedly bad experience to a relatively positive experience (Rykken, 2010).

Olson took the Ho-Chunk students on trips, interacted with Ho-Chunk families, and earned the respect of the Ho-Chunk community (Olson, 1975). She recounts the fact that she never had to discipline the Ho-Chunk students and felt they could be trusted at all times. Olson also worked to protect the Ho-Chunk community from outsiders who attempted to take advantage of them, such as researchers from the University of Wisconsin during the 1950s (Olson, 1975). Later, she also became an advocate for Native Americans, especially the Ho-Chunk, commenting throughout her memoir about the unfair treatment of Native Americans in education and in society in general.

Speaking of Indians as savages, as some books do, makes them want to withdraw into themselves and fall away from further education. Our society hasn't learned yet that it was the Indian who discovered America, and not Columbus. It was the Indians who

came here first and then had to give up their land. (Olson, 1975, p. 111)

Ho-Chunk and White integration into the district. The closing of the Hochungra School

at the Indian Mission in 1963 meant that the Ho-Chunk students then needed to attend school in

Black River Falls with the White students (Rykken, 2010, 2016). Because the school at the

Indian Mission only went to 8th grade, Ho-Chunk students and White students had attended high

school together prior to 1963 (Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2010). The process of integrating Ho-

Chunk students and White students presented many challenges; and according to prominent

Black River Falls historian, Paul Rykken (2015), "The integration experience and its

consequences, both intended and unintended, continue to challenge us in the early years of the

21st century" (p. 7).

Some of the challenges Rykken (2010, 2016) described facing Ho-Chunk students

included: encounters with racism, difficulty adjusting to the rigors of mainstream public

education, and participating in a curriculum that did not necessarily represent their background in

authentic ways (Hembd-Steele & Brieske, 1997; Olson, 1975; Rykken, 2016). There were

undoubtedly challenges for the White students as well, integrating with the Ho-Chunk students

for the first time. This is especially likely given the tumultuous climate of the United States'

own Civil Rights Movement and the heightened awareness of the issues of race in the country

during the 1960s (Banks, 2008).

Understanding the jarring concept of integration of the Ho-Chunk students and the White

students is paramount to this study. The integration of the two communities is still very recent

(fewer than 60 years at the time of this study) after many previous generations of separation

(Rykken, 2010, 2016). The consequences of the integration is relevant to understanding the

relationship between the school district and the Ho-Chunk Nation today, because many of the

students who were part of the initial integration in 1963 are still alive and now have grandchildren who live in the school district (Rykken, 2016).

Culturally responsive teaching. One of the most recent initiatives in the Black River Falls School District has been a push to incorporate culturally responsive teaching into its curriculum. Instead of focusing on Native American Awareness in individual units or during predetermined weeks, the district has opted for an infusion of Ho-Chunk culture and government into its overall curriculum, particularly at the secondary level (Rykken, 2016). The curriculum now discusses the Ho-Chunk Constitution in the same courses and in the same breath as the students learn about the United States Constitution and the Wisconsin Constitution (Rykken, 2016).

There have also been many milestones in terms of cooperation and partnership between the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Black River Falls School District (Rykken, 2016). The school district and the Ho-Chunk Nation signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2010: Ho-Chunk language classes are now offered as part of the high school's world languages curriculum, at least three Ho-Chunk members have been elected to serve on the Black River Falls School Board since 2000, and high school students can now receive college credit through the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (UWGB) for a class entitled "Ho-Chunk and Ethnic Studies" (Rykken, 2016). As of 2015, over 80 Black River Falls High School students have received dual credit for the UWGB course and over half of those students were not Native American (Rykken, 2016). In summation, Black River Falls High School history teacher and prominent Black River Falls historian, Paul Rykken (2016) wrote the following:

The relationship [between the Ho-Chunk Nation and the school district] continues to evolve and each step we take naturally leads to further collaborative possibilities and

challenges. The world will always require diligence and focus. The ultimate goal is to

establish and maintain structures and systems that work for the benefit of all students and

I am continually reminded that much of the work we do today will not come to fruition

during my career. We are planting seeds. (p. 14)

The school district today. The district currently operates two elementary schools, a

middle school, a high school, and an alternative school (Black River Falls School District

2017a). Total enrollment for the school district in the 2015-16 academic year was 1,757, and

approximately 23% of the district's students are Native American (Wisconsin Department of

Public Instruction, 2017; Black River Falls School District, 2017a). The district's vision

statement is: "In the School District of Black River Falls, we create an individualized path to

future success for every student through the consistent practices of dedicated educators and

meaningful partnerships with families and our community" (Black River Falls School District,

2017b). Their value statement espouses similar ideals, focused particularly on the concepts of

dedication, pride, trust, partnership, and excellence (Black River Falls School District, 2017b).

The district recently completed a strategic plan entitled "Vision 2020" that identifies four

pillars of emphasis: Student Success, Our People, Community Engagement, and Finance and

Facilities (Black River Falls School District, 2017a). One of the key elements in the Student

Success pillar includes providing ongoing professional development opportunities to staff and

administrators. This aspect will be relevant to the SEED project discussed earlier in this chapter

and to the research questions this study attempts to answer (Black River Falls School District

2017b).

Summary

This literature review has established a chain of logic that consists of four important

parts: Transformative Learning Theory as a theoretical lens guiding the study, the relevance of and need for privilege training for preservice and current service teachers, an overview of the history and significant research conducted on the National SEED Project, and the three-community context of the study (Black River Falls, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the Black River Falls School District). Resultant from this literature review, the need for high-quality diversity and inclusion professional development for PK-12 teachers in general, and Black River Falls School District teachers in particular, is clear.

Chapter III: Method and Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to examine the influence that Black River Falls public school teachers' voluntary participation in the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project has had upon their teaching practice. SEED was first introduced to the Black River Falls community in 2012; and over 50 Black River Falls community members, including several school district teachers, have participated in the SEED experience thus far (Michelle Cloud, SEED facilitator, personal communication, 2017). As of the date of this study, there has been no longitudinal research to evaluate the impact of the SEED project in Black River Falls.

This study seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the professional practice of Black River Falls School District teachers?

2. What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced Black River Falls School District teachers to make?

3. What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the Black River Falls SEED Project?

Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design to investigate its research questions. A hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm was deemed most appropriate to effectively examine the influence of the SEED Project upon public school teachers' professional practice in the Black River Falls School District. This section will describe the reasons that a qualitative research design was selected and explain why that approach was best suited to answer the study's research questions.

Qualitative research. Qualitative research is an emergent form of scientific inquiry rather than a prescribed or experimental paradigm that is used in positivistic studies (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Sofaer, 1999; Webb, 2016). "The process of [qualitative] research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's [natural] setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). An emergent research method was ideal for studying the extent to which the SEED seminars influenced teachers because the participants are given opportunities to reflect on their personal outcomes in relation to their professional practice.

Further, qualitative research is the quintessential research paradigm for understanding the meaning individuals acquire through their experiences (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Lichtman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Sofaer, 1999; Webb, 2016). Qualitative studies can also be heavily influenced by the researcher's philosophical perspective, such as the constructivist worldview that guides this study (Creswell, 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Indeed, because the researcher is the primary tool of data collection through observation, document collection, or interviews, it has been suggested by some scholars that all qualitative research is inherently biased (Sofaer, 1999). Nevertheless, qualitative studies have become more respected in the academic community since the 1950s, when quantitative methods were the primary form of scientific inquiry (Butin, 2010; Creswell, 2003, 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Webb, 2016).

There are many features that distinguish qualitative research designs from quantitative research designs, including the settings, methods, data collection and analysis, and sampling inherent in each paradigm (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Lichtman, 2013; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). For example, quantitative research occurs in largely experimental contexts, whereas qualitative

research generally occurs in a natural setting (Creswell, 2003; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Webb, 2016). Further, quantitative research typically employs a random sampling of participants in order to examine the generalizability of the hypothesis or hypotheses (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Conversely, qualitative research designs are not intended to have wide-ranging generalizability, as they study unique phenomena in specific contexts (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research paradigms. Within qualitative research, there are many different models of inquiry including: ethnographies, case studies, grounded theory studies, narrative inquiries, and phenomenologies. Ethnographies grew out of anthropology and tend to explore specific cultures, in context, through interviews and continuous participant observations (Creswell, 2003). Case studies are designed to "describe or give [an] audience a better understanding of a group of individuals…" (Webb, 2016, p. 107) through document collection, interviews, and observations. Grounded theory studies are designed to generate a theory to explain a specific phenomenon that is not currently described by an existing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Webb, 2016). Narrative inquiries are intended to "obtain a deep understanding and appreciation of the interrelationships among various features of life experiences and, possibly, to apply that understanding to related situations" (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 125).

Phenomenology. The final type of qualitative research discussed in this chapter is phenomenology, which is the research model used in this dissertation. A phenomenological approach is designed to examine a specific lived experience, phenomenon, or occurrence (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2013). The National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum was created in 1987 by Peggy McIntosh for the purpose of providing diversity training to professional educators (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2012; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). SEED itself is a unique experience that combines the participants' serial testimony

with a thorough exploration of theoretical concepts related to inclusive education (e.g. isms, privilege, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.). As such, a phenomenological approach is the ideal design to illuminate this study's research questions by exploring participants' personal recollections of the SEED seminars in Black River Falls. "All phenomenological human science research efforts are really explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations," (van Manen, 1990, p. 101).

One of the fundamental characteristics of phenomenological research is the use of open-ended questions, which is ideal for this study given the intensely personal nature of the SEED experience (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Guillory, 2008). Open-ended questions and semistructured interviews provide the participants an opportunity to express themselves in a manner that is comfortable for both them and the researcher (Creswell, 2003; Guillory, 2008). "Open-ended questions give the participants the flexibility and freedom to let their own voices be heard…" (Guillory, 2008, p. 55).

Finally, there is a paucity of SEED studies in the academic literature, which provided this dissertation with an opportunity to contribute to existing knowledge from both theoretical and applied perspectives. Indeed, qualitative research paradigms are ideal for topics that have not yet been widely studied or examined (Webb, 2016). This study is unique in the literature in that it examines the perceptions of public school teachers in a rural, predominantly biracial community in the United States' Midwest. Of the many journal articles, position papers, essays, encyclopedia entries, and personal narratives in the existing literature, there has not been a study attempted of this kind.

Hermeneutic phenomenology. As earlier discussed, phenomenology exists as a means to discover what individuals (e.g. participants) who experience the same phenomenon have in

common (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology grew out of the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in the early 20th century as a way to better understand the human experience (Lichtman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). There are several types of the phenomenological approach to research; however, scholars disagree on exactly how many there are.

For example, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) argue that there are three types of phenomenological research: transcendental, phenomenography, and hermeneutic phenomenology. However, Gill (2014) makes a case for five different types of phenomenology within two broad categories: Descriptive (Husserlian) and Interpretive (Heideggerian). The subsets are named for the scholars who researched and/or popularized the methodology, e.g. Sanders' phenomenology, Giogi's descriptive phenomenology, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology, Banner's interpretive phenomenology, and Smith's interpretive phenomenological analysis. However, this study is most closely related to van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is based upon Heidegger's notion that an individual's consciousness could not be evaluated separate from the conditions of the world because the world is part of an individual's experiences and helps to shape their understandings of reality (Lichtman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In other words, a person's perceptions are influenced by the world in which they live and cannot be separated from it when personal meaning is created from a situation or experience. Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to "shed light on taken for granted experiences that then enable researchers to create meaning and develop understanding" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 218).

In particular, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological thematic analysis will inform

this study's data analysis. His hermeneutic analysis is unique amongst phenomenologies in that it combines both interpretive and descriptive models (Gill, 2014; van Manen, 1990). According to Gill (2014), there are four analytical activities associated with a van Manen approach to hermeneutic thematic development: thematic analysis, a description of the experience through writing, thoughtfulness on the part of the researcher, and a consideration of both the parts and the whole by stepping back in order to maintain perspective (Gill, 2014).

This form of phenomenological analysis is germane because this dissertation sought to understand the influence that voluntary participation in the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum had upon Black River Falls Public School teachers. The one-on-one, semi-structured interview questions for this study asked the respondents about the professional and personal outcomes they experienced from participating in SEED. Many of the participants' responses focused upon the meaning they have derived from their SEED experience, thereby realizing the purpose, and demonstrating the relevance, of a hermeneutic phenomenological research paradigm.

Subject Selection and Description

A purposive sampling approach was used to answer this study's research questions. Purposive sampling involves "[participants] selected for the sample that are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgement…" (Black, 2010, p. 232). The researcher selected three participants from amongst the teachers who had participated in Black River Falls' SEED seminars and who taught in the district during the 2016-17 academic year.

The interview subjects of this study consist of one man and two women. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities and to maintain their privacy in accordance

with ethical social research conventions. All three interview subjects, Jadzia (pseudonym), Kira (pseudonym), and Julian (pseudonym), have taught in the school district for more than five years.

Number of participants. The determination of an appropriate sample size in qualitative phenomenological research can be challenging and subject to considerable variation (Guillory, 2008; Mason, 2010; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003; Webb, 2016). Some authors suggest that the only method of determining a study's actual sample size is to reach a saturation point when the participant's stories become redundant, and no new information is given (Mason, 2010; Webb, 2016). However, other literature suggests smaller sample sizes are appropriate provided that they provide rich data to the researcher (Ritchie et al., 2003).

> A phenomenological study usually involves identifying and locating participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon that is being explored. Sampling in the phenomenological tradition focuses on the selection of individual cases, and there is no attempt to generalize to a particular population. The participants, if you will, are the experiential experts on the phenomenon being studied...the researcher uses criterion sampling, selecting participants who closely match the criteria of the study. (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 123)

For this study, the researcher identified three participants as having potential for contributing rich data toward answering the three research questions. However, in the event that further investigation was required in order to reach a saturation/redundancy point, the sample size would have increased as needed. Subsequent additions to the participant pool were not necessary, but had they been, they would have followed the identical protocols as the group of initial participants.

Selection criteria. The participants for this study were purposively selected by the researcher in order to provide expert testimony and rich data. In order to keep the study timely and relevant, the researcher made the decision to interview teachers who had most recently taught in the district. Teachers who had participated in SEED since 2012, but were no longer teaching in the district in the 2016-17 school year, were not invited to participate in the study.

This study was focused upon understanding how SEED influenced the professional practice of teachers, not in general, but in a specific, predominantly biracial (White and Native American) setting. The researcher determined that the testimony of current teachers (those who were employed during the 2016-17 academic year) would provide the most germane, felicitous data. The researcher does acknowledge the potential advantages of interviewing teachers who were no longer employed in the district in that those educators may feel greater liberty to be honest about their experiences, both positively and negatively, with regard to SEED and the district. However, that approach was not used in this dissertation.

Therefore, participants for this study were selected based upon the following criteria:

1. All participants are licensed educators in the Black River Falls School District during the 2016-17 academic school year;

2. All participants have participated in, and completed, at least one year of SEED training in Black River Falls since 2012.

Participant solicitation. The participants were extended an invitation to participate in the study through an email message. The email message contained a formal request letter as an attachment. Prospective participants were asked to respond to the email in the affirmative or the negative. Both the introductory email and formal request for participation letter/consent form can be found in the appendices of this dissertation (appendices C and D, respectively).

Instrumentation

Two semistructured, individual (one-on-one) interviews were conducted using open-ended questions in order to explore the participant's experiences with the SEED project in Black River Falls. The use of open-ended interviews provided each respondent an opportunity to share his or her own personal recollections of their SEED seminars and describe to what extent those experiences affected his or her professional practice as an educator. An open-ended, semistructured interview format is also ideal in that it provided the researcher an opportunity to follow-up or probe further with the respondent during the interviews (Creswell, 2003; Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Further, open-ended, semistructured interview questions are especially appropriate for this research because the approach is similar to SEED's seminar format. SEED asked its participants to provide serial testimony about their own experiences in relation to discussion points (e.g. isms, privilege, discrimination, etc.) determined by the group facilitator. Similarly, respondents provided their recollections of their SEED experiences in relation to questions determined by the researcher.

The first interview protocol focused upon the respondent's experiences in the SEED seminars and their understanding of privilege. The interview began with a warm-up question designed to get the respondent talking and to build rapport with the interviewer. After the warm-up question, the interviewer asked open-ended questions related to SEED and privilege. The interviewer also had predetermined prompts in order to help the respondent if he or she had difficulty answering a question. The interview ended with a closing question asking the respondent if there was anything further to add to his or her testimony.

The second interview protocol focused upon the respondent's experiences in, and

perceptions of, the three different contextual communities of this study (Black River Falls, the Black River Falls School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation). Understanding the context is paramount to phenomenological research. Therefore, it was important to explore the extent to which the three-community context influenced the teachers' experiences in SEED. Similar to the first interview, the researcher established prompts to assist the respondent if necessary. The interview ended by asking the respondent if there was anything further they would like to add to their responses.

All interview protocols, including the participation solicitation email, letter, and consent form were sent to the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and were approved before any research or interviews of human subjects was conducted. A copy of the IRB's exemption letter can be found in appendix E of this dissertation.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary source of data collection in qualitative studies is the researcher (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Sofaer, 1999; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Webb, 2016). Each participant was interviewed twice, and each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The interview questions were derived from this study's research questions and from the literature review found in chapter two. All respondents were asked the same interview questions, though the researcher reserved the right to follow-up or probe further to solicit richer responses as needed.

The researcher and participant conducted the interviews in a comfortable, private setting in order to avoid distraction. In addition to notes taken by the researcher, the interviews were also recorded by an audio device to ensure quality and accuracy. The audio was kept confidential, accessed only by the researcher and Rev transcription service used to help organize the data generated during the interviews, and will be deleted within two years.

Data Analysis

The data in this study came from responses from the interview participants. Their responses were recorded and transcribed using a transcription service called Rev. Rev is a professional entity that was monetarily compensated by the researcher, not the university granting the doctoral degree or any other agency. The researcher's primary goal was to ensure that the fidelity of the participant's responses was maintained. The use of a transcription service was invaluable in pursuit of that objective.

The resultant transcripts were provided to the interview participants so that they could validate that the transcript was representative of the responses they shared (also known as "member checking"). Allowing the participants to review their transcripts not only helped improve accuracy, but also provided the participants with an opportunity to inform the researcher of testimony they do not want included in the results. Member checking provided an additional opportunity to ensure the privacy of the respondents in the event they felt their initial responses may have been inaccurate or inappropriate.

Once the transcripts were reviewed and confirmed by the participants, the researcher began analyzing the data. The transcripts were read at least twice in order to become familiar with the data. The data gathered from the interview transcript was coded into concepts areas (located in appendix F) and the concepts were organized into broad thematic groups consistent with hermeneutic data analysis (Gill, 2014; van Manen, 1990). The researcher then compiled the data into an Excel spreadsheet and reviewed the data again to ensure in-depth understanding of the material before organizing the results of the study in chapter four.

van Manen (1990) described three methods to developing hermeneutic themes from qualitative data: a wholistic or sententious approach, a selective or highlighting approach, and a

detailed or line-by-line approach. This dissertation used a selective approach to thematic development in its data analysis. "In the selective reading approach we...read a text several times and ask, *What statements or phrases seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?*" (van Manen, 1990, p. 93).

An example of the researcher's approach to data reduction, thematic analysis, and coding (from a previous study) is listed in the table on the next page:

Table 1

Data Reduction Example (From a Study about Online Shopping)

Statement	Initial Concept	Theme
1.) "I think it's exciting to order something and then find it on your doorstep."	Satisfaction	Satisfaction
2.) "I like to know that if something out of my control, like it arriving damaged or broken, that if there's a problem, that they'll take care of it, even though it's not their fault, either."	Customer Service	Satisfaction
3.) "I would recommend starting small. Maybe ordering something from a trusted website."	Recommendation	Satisfaction
4.) "Then, I found that you could get [your item] in two days, and it was just kind of a benefit for everybody."	Convenience	Satisfaction

Limitations

This portion of the chapter necessitates me, as the researcher, to break with academic

protocol and briefly write in the first person. I have chosen to depart from the standard third person writing style to describe my limitations because they are uniquely mine and require me to take ownership of them. Further, in my opinion, it is appropriate to "break the fourth wall" and use my voice to express them to you, the reader. This is the only portion of this dissertation in which I will write in the first person.

Philosophy of the researcher. Some scholars have argued that all qualitative research is inherently biased (Sofaer, 1999). I briefly considered a positivist (quantitative) approach to this study, but I realized that approach would not provide the requisite depth for each individual's stories. Understanding and interpreting the respondents' stories, in context, is paramount to the integrity of this study and is well-suited for a qualitative inquiry. "The [qualitative] paradigm considers the cultural and historical context in which the event happened. This post-empiricist view emphasizes interpretation as a central feature in the research" (Klemme, 1999, p. 57).

This study reflects my constructivist philosophical paradigm. Constructivism is predicated upon the idea that "Reality and knowledge reside in the minds of individuals. Knowledge may be uncovered by unpacking individual experiences" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 56). That philosophical perspective is fundamental to this study and, in tandem with this dissertation's Transformative Learning Theoretical lens, provides a perspective through which the SEED experience in Black River Falls will be examined.

It is my belief that individuals create their own understandings related to phenomena, and those understandings subsequently influence their reality. For example, I grew up in a Ho-Chunk community and was raised by my Ho-Chunk grandparents. Both of my grandparents dropped out of high school to either enter the workforce or to join the military. Fortunately, my grandparents had a strong work ethic that enabled them to provide for their two daughters, but

they knew their lack of formal education limited their opportunities. Resultant from their personal experiences and subsequent perceptions, they both consistently told me during my upbringing that I should invest in my studies because education would one day be my ticket to a better life.

My grandparents' struggles with education influenced their perception later in life that earning an education was important for future success. They saw how difficult their career prospects had been, and they wanted better for their children and their grandchildren. Therefore, the meaning they derived from their life experiences was to encourage their children and grandchildren to work hard in school, so that their progeny could have better lives than they did. Perceptions are paramount to understanding qualitative research because they create personal meaning, which may eventually influence behavior, as in the case of my maternal grandparents.

I acknowledge there are other philosophical perspectives that would provide alternative and viable lenses for exploring the SEED experience, such as interpretivism or pragmatism. However, I seek to understand the meaning individuals gleaned from their experience within the SEED seminars and the extent to which SEED influenced the way that they teach. In my opinion, a constructivist paradigm was ideal to illuminate this study's research questions.

Researcher subjectivity and influence on the setting. There are many biases that I must declare in order to ensure the reliability of this study (Butin, 2010; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Webb, 2016). It is important to know that I have a personal connection to all three communities studied in this dissertation. I am an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, which is one of the communities examined in this study. I was raised by my Ho-Chunk maternal grandparents and grew up with a working knowledge of the Ho-Chunk language and cultural mores. My Ho-Chunk heritage has been my primary cultural identity throughout my life, and

because of that, I have a strong connection to the community and the culture.

In addition, I was also raised in the Black River Falls community and attended the Black River Falls School District for my entire K-12 academic career. I have also been a participant in two separate SEED seminars during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years. In some ways, participation in SEED in Black River Falls has provided some unique insights into the need for research about this topic and can be viewed as a strength.

However, I am also aware that participation has created implicit biases that will, to some degree, impact the results of the research. For example, I firmly believe in the value of the SEED experience. I have seen, first-hand, the positive, social justice-affirming energy it can inspire in other people, especially professional educators. I believe teachers, especially in rural West-Central Wisconsin, would benefit from exposure to the SEED curriculum in order to make their classrooms more inclusive to students of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual identity, and racial backgrounds. The needs of students change over time, and it is my belief that teachers should have access to professional development opportunities that help equip them to meet students' evolving needs.

My initial participation in SEED was based upon curiosity more so than any specific desire to be a part of an inclusive educational experience. I had heard from some colleagues and friends that the experience had been beneficial for them, which piqued my interest. I have also maintained an active interest in social justice since I was a teenager and, after learning more about SEED's purpose, I was eager to continue my exploration of how to actualize a social justice philosophy.

Further, I am personally acquainted with all of the respondents for this study. Two of the respondents were teachers during my K-12 education in the Black River Falls School District,

but I did not enroll in any of the courses they taught. The final participant is a former teacher of mine, and someone with whom I have remained in contact with since my graduation from the district. It is possible that I may unintentionally treat the final participant differently, and that he/she may be less likely to provide information that he/she believes I do not want to hear. However, I am confident that my study will be free of any undue challenges and will maintain high levels of both scholarship and professionalism.

My familiarity with the participants has the potential to bias my research findings (Sofaer, 1999), but I believe it actually strengthens my findings. The fact that I am acquainted with my respondents creates an inherent atmosphere of trust and rapport, which can be a challenge to create in qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is my hope that my familiarity with my research participants will provide increased believability to this study.

Finally, one of the persons responsible for bringing SEED to Black River Falls, and one of SEED's co-facilitators, is my biological mother. She has been at the forefront of the SEED project in the Black River Falls community since 2012. She received training at SEED's New Leaders Week and has also presented at national Native American education conferences about SEED.

In addition, she was also one of the co-facilitators for the SEED groups in which I participated. In some ways, her facilitation of my SEED group limited my experience. I did not always feel as free to share my personal opinions or stories as much as I would have had there been an impartial facilitator. I did not want to inadvertently hurt her feelings as a result of my responses. My personal experience in SEED was generally positive, but I also recognize that having my mother as a co-facilitator made mine unique from the experiences of the other participants.

Level of experience. This dissertation represents the most significant research project of my academic career thus far. My undergraduate degree is in music history and literature, which required significant amounts of research and writing. In my master of music program, I continued to expand my research skills within the context of music history, music theory, and music education/performance. However, this study is my first experience as a social science researcher conducting interviews of human subjects and analyzing the resultant data.

In my doctoral coursework at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, I have received training in both the positivistic (quantitative) and the anti-positivistic (qualitative) research paradigms. The courses prepared me to be conduct ethical, competent research as a novice scholar in pursuit of a terminal degree in education. Further, in preparation for this dissertation, I studied extensively outside of my required coursework in order to better to understand phenomenological research methods and interview techniques in order to yield richer data from my participants. Though inexperienced, I felt well-prepared to conduct this study.

Summary

In summary, this study sought to examine the extent to which Black River Falls public school teachers' voluntary participation in the SEED project has impacted their professional teaching practice. Black River Falls is a unique context in that it consists of three distinct, yet interconnected, communities: the city, the school district, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. The intersectionality of the three communities highlights the need for inclusive curriculum professional development for the school district teachers. Thus far, there has not been any longitudinal research to assess the outcomes of the SEED project in Black River Falls, and there was a clear need for such a study.

In chapter two, a clear chain of logic was built upon four pillars of research, including

Transformative Learning Theory as an evaluative lens for the study, an examination of Privilege Studies that highlighted the need for inclusive professional development for preservice and current service teachers, an overview of the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum, and a description of the context in which the study will occur.

Chapter three established the research design and methodology that was used to conduct this study. A qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological research model was ideal to examine this study's problem and research questions through open-ended, semistructured interviews with participants. The researcher has determined a procedure for data collection and analysis based upon fundamentally sound social science methods. The following chapter will discuss the findings of this study in detail.

Chapter IV: Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the influence that BRF public school teachers' voluntary participation in the SEED Project has had upon their teaching practice. This chapter will discuss the findings from the participants' testimony (data) that was collected over two separate interviews and analyzed by the researcher. This study sought to answer the following three research questions:

1. To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the professional practice of BRF School District teachers?

2. What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced BRF School District teachers to make?

3. What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the BRF SEED Project?

Demographics

Three participants were purposively selected for this study. The selection criteria required that the participants were state licensed educators in the BRF School District during the 2016-17 academic school year and had participated in (and completed) at least one year of SEED training in BRF since 2012. Each of the participants was interviewed twice through the use of open-ended questions in a semi-structured format.

The study's participants consisted of two women (Jadzia and Kira) and one man (Julian). All interview subjects met the sampling criteria and were given pseudonyms to protect their identities and to maintain their privacy. Further, all three participants have taught in the school district more than five years, which may provide a greater depth of understanding related to the three-community context of this study: BRF, the BRF School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

In other words, because they have been in the district for several years, they have more experience upon which to base their responses and are well-established in their teaching careers.

Table 2

Interview Respondent Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Sex/Race	Teaching Experience
Jadzia	F/Caucasian	More than 5 years
Julian	M/Caucasian	More than 5 years
Kira	F/Caucasian	More than 5 years

Note: Protecting the privacy of the interview participants is paramount to the researcher. Therefore, the specific content area in which the respondents teach and, in some cases, the specific changes to curriculum were generalized in this thematic discussion. It is the opinion of the researcher that sharing too many specific details may inadvertently identify the interview participants given the relatively small size of the BRF School District faculty. Therefore, no further demographic information beyond the sampling criteria is provided in this dissertation, by design, in order to protect the identities of the research subjects.

Findings

All interview participants were interviewed twice using open-ended questions in semi-structured formats. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were conducted at settings outside of school in order to promote confidentiality for the respondent. The first interview focused upon SEED and the concept of privilege. The second interview focused upon the ways

in which participation in SEED was influenced by the three-community context of this study.

The research collected from participants produced 57 total concepts. After careful review, the 57 concepts were reduced to nine overall hermeneutic themes that encapsulated the participants' testimony. The first research question produced the largest number of themes, four, because it was the broadest of the study's research questions. Conversely, the final research question yielded the lowest number of themes, two, but it was also the most focused of the study's research questions.

The researcher's goal in this chapter was to let the participants speak for themselves. In other words, there are extensive direct quotations from the respondents used in this chapter so that the reader would have an idea of the teachers' feelings about their experiences in BRF SEED. A discussion of the participants' testimony will be conducted by the researcher in chapter five. The following findings are organized by each of this study's guiding research questions and the resultant themes that answer each question.

Research question 1: To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the professional practice of Black River Falls School District teachers? The first research question attempted to discover what impact participation in SEED had upon the way teachers teach. This question was designed to be broad in that it could encompass both the practical (e.g. the way teachers teach) and the personal (e.g. individual takeaways). This research question was answered by the following four emergent themes:

1. Increased awareness of diversity issues

2. Building connections

3. Recognition of privilege and discrimination

4. Deeper understanding of self

Increased awareness of diversity issues. All interview participants indicated that one of the most important takeaways from BRF SEED was gaining a deeper understanding, or awareness, of issues related to diversity. Many found the topic of gender identity particularly informative, as that has recently become a reality more high school students face, even in rural communities where such challenges may "appear" less prevalent than in urban areas. Kira stated that SEED helped her be more conscious of "all the different ways, the different names students identify with. I have a few students who are like, 'that's not what I want to be called'." She believed it is important to acknowledge a student's preferred identity because "it's important, especially at the high school level, where kids are starting that process of figuring out who they are individually." Kira indicated that her time in SEED helped her embrace that realization.

Another impactful aspect of BRF SEED experience was an exploration of the topic of homophobia and LGBTQ issues. Two of the teachers interviewed described how much the district has changed since they began teaching in terms of the number of students who are "out" as gay or bisexual. In addition, both described what they considered to be an evolution of acceptance amongst the students related to sexual orientation as well. Julian said, "One big difference would be the amount of students who are out. People are more accepting of it. I imagine there is still some bullying, but not like it would have been when I first started teaching here."

Similarly, Jadzia recalled an anecdote when she and a fellow faculty member were standing outside of the school monitoring students as they got onto school busses to go home. During that situation, two male students shared a quick kiss before getting on the bus. "That would have never happened 10 years ago," said Jadzia. "You [would] not see two 14-year old boys kissing before one of them got on the bus. That would never have happened. So I think we

are in a world where young people are kind of like, 'What's the big deal?'"

Beyond sexual orientation, the interview participants also described an increased knowledge about the Ho-Chunk people through their involvement with SEED. Though Ho-Chunk history and culture is not a part of the SEED curriculum specifically, many of the SEED seminar participants were enrolled members of the Ho-Chunk Nation. According to the interview respondents, the Ho-Chunk members provided impactful testimony that resonated with them. For Kira, a sentiment offered by a Ho-Chunk elder/SEED participant about the concept of owning land proved thought-provoking:

He made a statement one night at SEED about how...in [the Ho-Chunk] culture, people never owned land, but took care of the land and used it for what [they] needed. I mean that's just like a reality check, how I grew up in a very agrarian background, and people owned land. People bought land and that's what I kind of knew; I didn't really think of it in other ways. And after being in SEED and listening to people's stories and their backgrounds really kind of makes you, especially in the role that I am as a teacher, step back. I thought about that on my whole drive home that night.

From a broader, school-related perspective, the interview participants described the racial divide between the Ho-Chunk and White students as "narrowing." "I think the environment has gotten better within the student body. When I first arrived [in BRF], I kind of felt this division between Native and non-Native or minority students. And I don't see that much anymore," said Jadzia. "I just see a lot of love among students regardless of the color of their skin. Are there still kids that are unkind to one another? Absolutely. But I think it's just kids being jerks."

Julian attributed the progress in race relations to the changes that the BRF School District made to its elementary schools. Previously, the school district had three separate K-5 elementary

schools, which meant that all the students within the district were not integrated until sixth grade. However, the district has since changed to a grade-center model, thereby integrating all students much earlier. The change was made because district leadership hoped to encourage various grade levels to share resources, maximize expertise, and to work together in a team setting (Paul Rykken, BRF High School history teacher, personal communication, 2017). Julian believes that change greatly improved race relations within the district:

> And now I think because everyone grows up together, from the start, friendships are formed earlier and relationships are formed earlier. And I think that made a difference through high school though because there are friendships...strong friendships between all kinds of groups.

Building connections. One of the seminal concepts in the SEED experience is bringing diverse people together (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Consistent with that idea, all of the teachers interviewed for this study expressed feeling a strong connection with their fellow SEED participants. The relationships they developed did not happen immediately, but were built over time throughout the nine-month SEED seminars.

Each BRF SEED seminar begins with a group meal; thereby, allowing the participants a chance to chat informally before the evening's activities. The interview subjects all mentioned that the food was a positive addition that helped put them at ease. "I think the food also helped," said Julian. "Because I think people speak different when they're eating together...a lot of stuff during the meal time was brought up in a conversational tone and not in a formal tone." Concurring with Julian, Kira stated that the food "was lovely. Obviously food always brings people together."

The experience of SEED also helped the teachers get to know other members of the

community as well. The diversity of the group appealed to the teachers, especially the cross

section of ages and races. "In my group, there was someone 10, 15 years older than me, but then

there were people that were 20 years younger than me," said Jadzia. "So that allowed us to see

[a] whole range of experiences and it was really eye opening."

Some of the topics discussed in SEED can be very raw and emotional. The interview

participants were impacted by the personal stories their fellow SEED members shared, which

also encouraged them to share some of their own experiences. For example, Jadzia was pleased

to know that there are "people in my community who care about these things. There are people

in my building, people in my school district that feel the same way I do."

The respondents also shared the importance of the setting and the size of the group. As

mentioned in chapter two of this study, the SEED seminars are limited to no more than 20

members. According to the respondents, the small groups encouraged them to share freely and

made them feel safe. Jadzia said:

> That environment, that nine-month experience, is so intimate. I mean, you're kind of
>
> exposing your soul. I mean, you share so much about who you are as a person, how you
>
> grew up, the experiences you had. You hear about other people's experiences. You share
>
> things that are deeply personal and painful, and there's no judgment.

The teachers also appreciated the opportunity to interact with more Ho-Chunk community

members. For Julian, his favorite aspect of SEED was that he "got to associate with adults of the

Ho-Chunk Nation. Because, generally, in my occupation, I deal with the children." He

continued, "It was really enlightening to have people much older than me or my own age to talk

about the history, or to talk about the customs, or to talk about the traditions."

Moving forward, Jadzia described that she also felt that her connection with her SEED

group could be a valuable resource for her. If she had questions about a delicate topic, e.g. Ho-Chunk culture, she believes she could seek help from a member of her SEED group:

> I have a closer relationship with the members of that group, personally one-on-one and I feel like I could go to them and talk to them and put my foot in my in mouth if I had to. Like I would feel comfortable speaking to them and if I said something inappropriate, they would be like..."that's not okay." They would call me on something if I said something wrong and they would be honest with me and they would let me grow and figure things out and help me along the way.

Recognition of privilege and discrimination. Two of the topics discussed in SEED are the concept of privilege (e.g. White, male, heterosexual) and the systems of power that promote discrimination in society. This theme arose from questions about what the teachers knew about privilege before SEED, what they learned about it during SEED, and how they see the concept of privilege within the BRF School District. For many, they were surprised at how oblivious people could be to privilege. "I think the various elements we had for the different personal backgrounds of the various people that were attending [SEED] really showed the full spectrum of how naive some people were about racism, sexism, and privilege," said Julian. "Those who would probably not experience it themselves...were just not aware of how much of it there really is out there."

Jadzia expressed genuine surprise to learn there was so much discrimination still in existence. She was also surprised to learn how many people in her SEED group had said they have experienced discrimination in their lifetimes. "Just hearing those stories absolutely blows me away because I just can't believe that that's the world we're living in," said Jadzia. "I would never treat someone like that. I haven't witnessed that, and so that surprised me."

Concurring with Jadzia, Julian said that he had always considered himself "fairly knowledgeable" about racism, but hearing first-hand accounts of it was different for him. "When you actually get to hear the experiences of some people, and not read about it or not watch a video about it...it makes you much more aware," said Julian. Interestingly, all three teachers had not learned about privilege in their teacher training. Instead, their diversity training during their preservice preparation consisted of multiculturalism courses without the concept of privilege mentioned specifically.

Learning more about the Ho-Chunk culture's understanding of time helped Kira put one particular student's behavior in context. For example, Kira learned during the SEED seminars that Ho-Chunks are, culturally, more fluid with their definitions of time. In some ways, it could be described as a "get there when you get there" sort of philosophy. After learning that from her Ho-Chunk SEED group members, she began to recognize how the school district does not necessarily understand that concept in its policies. Indeed, that lack of understanding on the part of school administration may preclude students from earning certain privileges within the school:

We have this advising program in the morning and I have a student who is Native American and he's late by four minutes every single day. His grandma brings him, but he's late every single day, and it's our job to talk to them about their attendance and that's what gets them on privilege [meaning extra benefits]. Being on time is not his thing. Until we understand and recognize that, he never will be on that top privilege list because he'll have tardies all the time.

According to the respondents, one of the most impactful aspects of the SEED experience related to privilege was the Privilege Walk activity. During the activity, the facilitators ask the participants to line up shoulder to shoulder. Once the participants are in position, the facilitators

read a series of statements such as "I had more than 20 books in my home [growing up]" or "I have never been shamed for my sexual orientation" and so on. Participants are asked to either take steps forward or backward depending on their individual answers. At the end of the activity, the participants are asked to look around at their fellow SEED members and notice the difference in who is further ahead (those with more privilege) and those who are further behind (those with less privilege). According to Julian:

> So again, you take [being privileged] for granted, 'cause you never had to overcome that hurdle. It's like getting to start five hurdles ahead than other people. Just by chance. And if you, like I said, if you have it you don't realize you have it until you just happen to look around and go "Holy cow!"

Deeper understanding of self. This theme grew out of the testimony the interview participants shared about how their role as a teacher has been influenced by the SEED experience, their personal takeaways from SEED, and their place on what many simply called "the journey." Jadzia described her year in SEED as a "really emotional journey that entire year." She continued:

> The course requires a great deal of self-reflection, a great deal of self-examination, "Who am I? What kind of a world am I living in?" And, that can be very raw, and it can be very painful, too, to think about what privileges I have as a White woman, and about the world that other people are living in and that don't have what I have. It was quite self-examining, and it was painful.

Similarly, Kira mentioned that her SEED experience examined her upbringing and the source of one's beliefs. "It's not always stuff that was said, but things that you were shown [as a child]." Julian was also encouraged to reexamine his upbringing and came to the conclusion that he "had

had [life] pretty good," suggesting that he had easier life experiences than he may have realized prior to participating in SEED.

SEED encouraged Jadzia to reflect on message she received as a child from her father about dating. He told her that he did not care about the religion of the man she was going to marry, but he wanted to make sure she did not marry a person of color. She found that sentiment ironic, considering the small Wisconsin town in which she grew up had no persons of color living there at the time. However, the message of discrimination was clear to Jadzia, and it appears as though participation in SEED brought those memories to the fore once again.

For Jadzia, reflecting on her father's biases prompted her to examine her own. SEED had encouraged her to think about which modern challenges she would have difficulty accepting in her own child's life. For her grandfather, it was the idea of his son marrying a Catholic girl. For her father, it was the idea of his daughter marrying a person of color. Jadzia identified a different obstacle for her child:

> I think the issue that would bother me the most is if my child were transgendered and only because I would know the pain [my child] would face throughout [his/her] life and I worry a whole lot about surgeries and altering one's body and chemicals. That scares me in general. So I think part of that SEED training, it makes you think about if I drew a line, where would I draw a line or where do I still need to grow? Because we all have an issue where we think, "Well, this is okay, but I'm struggling with that."

Finally, the respondents also mentioned their understanding of diversity and inclusion to be akin to a physical journey. They believe that they started in one place (e.g. when they began teaching) and are moving toward a place that is more informed and more accepting. According to their testimony, they believe that SEED has helped them along the way, including the

development of the idea that people are at different places in their individual expeditions, and that should be respected. Jadzia said:

> I also understand that everybody else isn't on this journey and may be at a different place than I am, and I cannot judge if someone is a little bit further behind me, just like I hope that someone who is a little further ahead on this journey doesn't judge me.

Research question 2: What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced Black River Falls school district teachers to make? The second research question was designed to complement the first research question by seeking specific examples of the ways in which SEED has influenced the way BRF School District teachers teach. In other words, if SEED impacted the teachers' teaching style, this question sought to understand the specific changes SEED encouraged the teachers to make. This question was answered by the following three themes:

1. Promoting understanding through teaching practice

2. Inclusion of diversity into the curriculum

3. Greater willingness to have difficult conversations

Promoting understanding through teaching practice. Interview participants noted that their experiences in BRF SEED encouraged them to be more "empathetic" (Julian), "sensitive" (Kira), and "aware" (Jadzia) of diversity issues that impact their students. The ranges of diversity issues that affect their students ranged from racial differences (e.g. Ho-Chunk vs. White), sexual orientation differences, gender identity struggles, and students who feel voiceless in school. All of the respondents noted that SEED has made a positive impact upon the way that they teach their students. Jadzia recalled this anecdote from one of the classes she taught:

> For example, the other day in class, we had to do these little ice breakers and one of the

questions was: "If you could live at any time in the world, what time would that be in life?" One of my Native American students said, "Well, I am Native American and I would want to live in America in a time before White people came [to America]." I said, "That is so understandable." There were a few students around her that were quite, I think, taken aback by that statement. I said, "Well, it's ironic because one of the times that I think would be very interesting to live is like the time of Laura Ingalls Wilder, which is the time when White people are coming to take your land." But the students that were around this young Native American woman, when I acknowledged White people took [Native American's] land, I think they were just surprised that it would be stated. But it's a fact. I was trying to say to her what we did was awful and historically not okay. But I think other people were taken aback. So, I want to live a life that models acceptance and love. I also want to be a voice for those voices that might go unnoticed otherwise.

For Kira, SEED helped her see a more complete picture of the socioeconomic challenges that face many families within the BRF community and to have greater empathy for those situations. In particular, she mentioned that the SEED discussions surrounding income disparity made her more aware of the financial challenges many students face at home regarding technology or a lack thereof. The BRF School District is a "one-to-one" technology district, which means that there is one electronic device (e.g. tablet or laptop) for each student. However, in some cases, the school district's computer doubles as the family computer. Kira said:

> One day I had a student [to whom] I said, "Do you have your laptop?" "No, I don't have my laptop." I said, "Did something happen to it?" "No, my mom's using it today 'cause she needs to apply for jobs, so she was going to take my computer down to the library." This is the reality of some of the kids that we deal with. How do you get mad at a kid for

[that]?

Kira also described that she believes that her experience in SEED has made her a better listener when working with her students. "Sometimes they're not always looking for an answer, but they're looking for someone to listen to them and maybe give them some guidance," said Kira. Kira is also more selective about the words she uses and the facial expressions she displays when working with students as a result of participating in SEED. Thus far, her increased sensitivity has generated some encouraging feedback from her students. According to Kira:

> I, personally, feel like there's a lot of things that you just have to be sensitive about. The way you might react facially or what you might say, definitely as a teacher and that's what I do in my profession, is work with students, and build those relationships and you know, I had a student not long ago who, last year, was like, *"You're the only teacher that actually stopped to see why I'm not doing my work."*

> ***Inclusion of diversity into the curriculum.*** This theme emerged from the specific examples the teachers provided about the ways in which they have been able to introduce diversity into the curricula they teach. However, not all of the respondents felt that they were able to modify their curriculum to include greater diversity issues. In particular, Jadzia, given the nature of her content area, did not believe it was realistic to add multicultural elements into her teaching. However, both Julian and Kira were able to find meaningful ways to incorporate diversity into their existing teaching loads.

Julian stated that he includes more cultural elements into the subject he teaches. He observes that teaching material about the United States can be problematic from a diversity standpoint because there are not many first-person accounts of people of color from the early days of the country. Nevertheless, he has worked to include their voices into his content area as

much as he can to demonstrate to students that "people [of color] existed even though it doesn't appear they did."

Kira has also had success incorporating diversity and multiculturalism into her content area. She has added different elements from across the United States and from throughout the world into her curriculum. "I teach a...very specific content area and thinking about just how I can make that more open-ended for kids as far as the [activities] we choose. I feel I did a pretty good job after taking that [SEED] class...and the multicultural aspect of things," said Kira.

Though she has already included multicultural elements into her classes, Kira expressed a desire to include more from SEED into her curriculum. In particular, Kira wishes more of the SEED material were designed for high school-aged students. She believes that activities such as the aforementioned Privilege Walk would resonate with her students. However, she is hesitant to use that activity because she does not wish to make any students feel shame for being further ahead or further behind their classmates. Kira said:

> Well, it was very evident when we did the [Privilege Walk] the first night and I so wanted to take that back and use that in my class. I thought a lot about it...and I didn't [incorporate it] just because I was being sensitive to the students that I was teaching. Some of them, literally…don't have running water, they don't have electricity, and I think [the Privilege Walk] would be just that much more detrimental to them.

Despite the challenges of incorporating specific SEED activities into the PK-12 curriculum, all three participants mentioned the creation of a new diversity course at BRF High School in fall 2017. "[The school] started a program this year which deals in having students create programs to help make other students aware of ethnic bias, bullying, and a lot of other topics talked about in [SEED]," said Julian. The students will learn about diverse issues and perform skits designed

to educate other students in the district.

The skits will be performed at all levels of the district ranging from elementary to the high school level. From what Julian understood, the new course was intended to "enlighten the kids to be more aware." Though all the respondents realized that it was unlikely to completely wipe out racism, they were encouraged by the addition of the new class to the BRF High School course offerings.

Greater willingness to have difficult conversations. This is the final emergent theme from this study's second research question. This theme resulted from several comments shared by the interview respondents. All three of the teachers described situations when they were willing to discuss "difficult" subject matter (e.g. discrimination, privilege, or a lack of sensitivity) with their colleagues or their students. In their opinion, their SEED experiences helped build their confidence to engage in those types of discussions.

When working with students, Julian said he tries to bring up diversity issues more often than he used to, but he fears sounding patronizing. "[I can't say] I know what it's like. No, I don't," said Julian. "I try to understand it, but there's no way anybody but somebody who has felt [discrimination] knows what it's like." Instead, Julian uses the content of his courses to begin conversations amongst his students designed to get them thinking about complex, diverse issues. "If you can bring up [privilege] and let the student discover for themselves...you can set the table with what the student needed and not try to cram it down their throat," said Julian.

Kira has also been more direct with students about bullying, particularly bullying done through social media. She has confronted students about calling another student "worthless" via text and uses the experience as a teachable moment. Similarly, Julian has also been more comfortable intervening on bullying that has a racial or ethnic slant to it. He said:

If I see bullying or I see people looking down on another type of people, whether, again, based on religion, on race, on creed, on gender, I try to, without preaching...facilitate a way for the person who may be doing to look at it through the eyes of somebody else. And have the light bulb come on in their head and they discover it with a little help. I [try to be] a catalyst.

Jadzia has focused her attention on her colleagues and district leadership. For example, she has mentioned several times to the administration that she would like to see parent-teacher conferences occasionally take place at the Ho-Chunk Nation headquarters, located just outside the BRF city limits, in order to make the Ho-Chunk parents feel, perhaps, more at ease. "It has been known that sometimes it's our Native American students whose parents don't attend conferences because they don't feel comfortable," said Jadzia. "Why don't we go out to the [Ho-Chunk] Nation and talk to parents there?"

However, when discussing matters with her co-workers, she said she sometimes takes a more cautious approach when discussing diversity-related issues. "You don't want to alienate anyone. You don't want to turn someone off to an idea; you just want to...let them pause and do some reflection," she said. Overall, Jadzia expressed sincere hopefulness that her colleagues will continue to embrace an open-minded perspective on diversity in their teaching, as she has attempted to do. Jadzia said:

I think I am surrounded by very well-educated people in my profession, teachers. But that said, sometimes you're cautious about holding up that mirror, and sometimes, you just ask open-ended questions and get them and hope that they stop and think. Because you never want to shut down that door. You never want to put together a barrier between you and that other person, but you always want to remain open and just have them think

about, "What about this?" or "What about that?" And, hopefully, you're nudging them along.

Research question 3: What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the Black River Falls SEED Project? The third research question attempted to discover what prompted teachers to participate in SEED. Essentially, of all the professional development opportunities available to teachers, what was it about SEED that piqued their interest? This question was designed to be narrow in focus and scope. As a result, this research question was answered by the following two emergent themes:

1. Professional motivations

2. Recruitment

Professional motivations. All three interview participants mentioned that one of the most important reasons they participated in BRF SEED was because they could use the experience to earn college credit that would count toward renewal of their teaching licenses. Prior to 2017, Wisconsin educators were required to renew their professional licenses every five years. According to Julian:

> Well, one [motivating factor that led me to participate] was the fact that I could take it for a credit...and I thought it would be a good way to get...into the community and meet adults of various cultures, which, as a teacher, you're exposed to the students, but not typically the adults I had a chance to hear, and mingle with adults of various cultures as well.

Wisconsin educators were previously required to earn continuing education credits in order to maintain their teaching license. However, in late 2017, the state of Wisconsin removed that requirement for teachers who currently hold professional licenses. It is unclear whether the

change to Wisconsin education policy will adversely impact future iterations of BRF SEED by removing what teachers described as an incentive to participate.

Recruitment. All three interview subjects described being encouraged or recruited to participate in BRF SEED through a variety of methods, including flyers, emails recommending the program, and personal conversations with SEED alumni who worked for the district. "On the handout that was forwarded to me, there was a brief description of what the program would entail," said Jadzia. "A lot of it was based on the schedule and what potential topics would come up, and that was sent to all staff."

Kira mentioned that she was recruited to participate in SEED. In fact, if a colleague had not encouraged her to sign up, she may never have joined. According to Kira:

Another colleague also really pushed it and pushed the idea. I'm pretty sure that she's the one that sent the thing out also once our [administration], you know, kind of sends these generic things out all the time and it's easy to push delete, but she was like, "This is a really good one that's community based." She said, "It's a lot of hands-on experiences and activities and you get to know a lot of people in your community."

Julian simply received a description of SEED, but he was not directed to participate by anyone. He recalls that an invitation was extended and he happily accepted. The message Julian received was "this [opportunity] is open to you and it would be beneficial to you." He also believes one of the biggest reasons other colleagues of his did not participate is because they feel that they do not have enough time to join SEED. According to Julian:

I think that's the biggest thing would just be people would say, "I'd love to do it but I don't have the time." [But the monthly seminars] went by fast. I think people thinking it would take a lot more time than it does would be the biggest obstacle [to joining].

As earlier discussed, SEED meets for three hours once per month over the course of nine months. Jadzia and Julian both believe that it would be beneficial for the BRF School District to create a formal relationship with SEED in some way, so that the time commitment outside of the teachers' other professional responsibilities would be limited. Jadzia said:

> It would be really nice in so far as the setup of the course if our district wanted to make a commitment to SEED training. I think they tried this a little bit last year. We had so much in-service time throughout the year. [SEED] could be built into the structure of our day without it being *one more thing*.
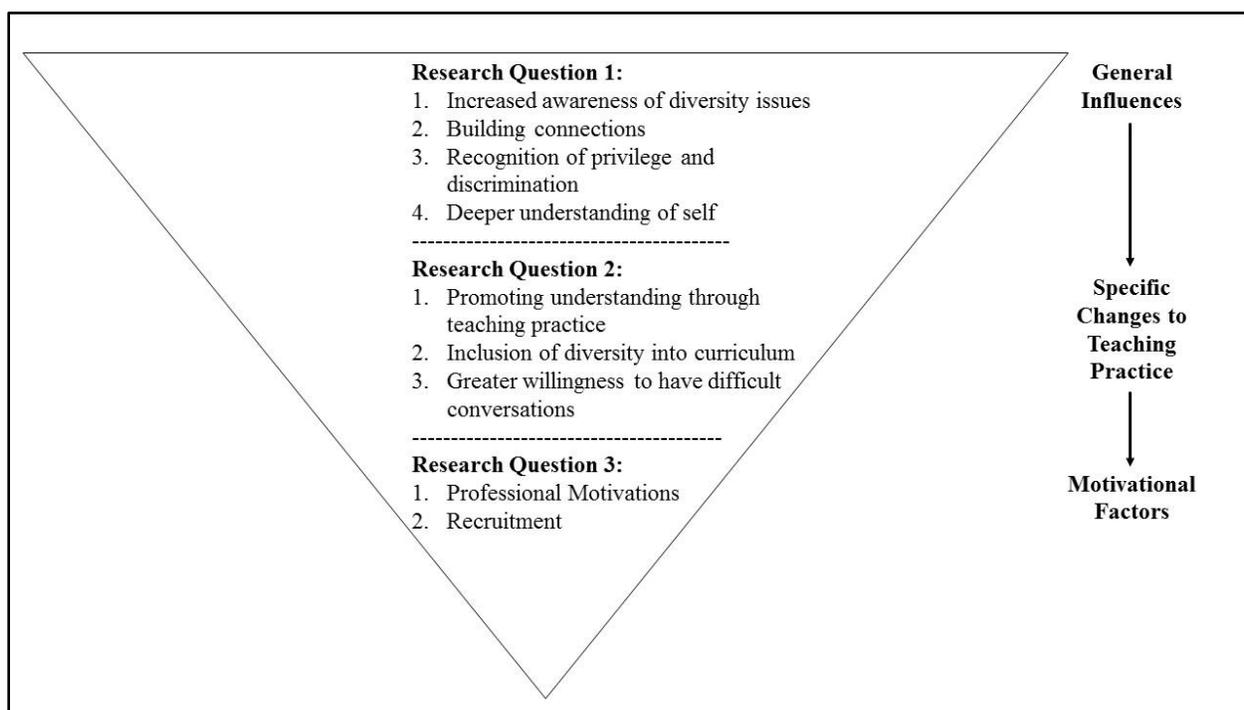
Figure 2. An illustration of this study's research questions and the resultant themes. The figure also depicts the ways in which the research questions and emergent themes move from the broad to the specific. Image created by Marcus F. Lewis (2017).

Summary

This chapter described the results of the hermeneutic thematic analysis conducted by the

researcher. During the analysis, 57 concepts were produced, which were then reduced to nine hermeneutic themes designed to answer this study's research questions. Many direct quotations of the teacher's responses were shared to let the interview subjects "speak for themselves" and to tell their own truths. Through the examination of the participants' testimony and the resultant themes, it is clear that all three teachers had powerful, largely positive experiences during BRF SEED.

They described an increased understanding of issues related to diversity and inclusion, including matters related to gender identity and cultural diversity. Further, participants also described a strong connection to the members of their group that exists because of their shared SEED experience and the difficult, emotional, and revealing topics they explored together. Through their journey, they also came to better understand the role that privilege and discrimination plays in the world and within their community. Finally, interview respondents also described a deeper understanding of themselves and life experiences that have shaped who they are and what they believe.

The following chapter is the last chapter of this study. In chapter five, the researcher will examine the results through this study's theoretical lens, Transformative Learning Theory. Further, the final chapter will also discuss how the results of the study interact with existing literature on SEED and will make a specific conclusion, provide a framework for the evaluation of this study, and will suggest several recommendations for future research regarding SEED in BRF.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Evaluation, and Recommendations

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to determine the extent to which voluntary participation in SEED had upon BRF School District teachers' professional practice. By understanding the extent of SEED's influences, qualitative data was generated, evaluated, and can be used to determine the future of the program in the BRF community. In other words, this study sought to answer the following question overall: has BRF SEED made a difference in the way teachers teach?

The previous chapter of this dissertation focused upon the presentation of the data collected and what the interview participants said about their experiences. This chapter will discuss the participants' responses within the context of existing literature outlined in chapter two, particularly this study's theoretical lens, Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory. Finally, this chapter will discuss the study's contributions and conclusions, discuss criteria for the evaluation of this study, and make recommendations for future action and research related to SEED in BRF.

Discussion

This section will discuss the ways in which the data from chapter four relates to the material introduced in the literature review (chapter two). First, this portion will compare the participants' SEED experiences with the existing literature about SEED overall. Second, this section will also discuss the data collected in this study through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory. Finally, this portion will also discuss any participant responses that may be incongruent with the existing literature. In education research, those data are often referred to as "negative cases."

The National SEED Project. The National SEED Project began in 1987 as a way for

teachers to design and execute their own professional development (McIntosh et al., 2012; Towery et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2005). In order to respond to the needs of diverse students, educators must discuss and investigate multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches within the context of their professional development (Wood et al., 2005). The following section will discuss the relationship that the respondent's testimony to each research question relates to existing SEED literature.

Research question 1. This question was answered by four themes: Increased awareness of diversity issues, Building connections, Recognition of privilege and discrimination, and a Deeper understanding of self. The four emergent themes are largely consistent with the SEED literature. Indeed, the experiences of the teachers profiled in this study are remarkably similar to those of other participants documented in the SEED literature, in that they expressed personal transformations as a result of the SEED seminars and curriculum (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005).

The content of the SEED seminars asked the teachers to look within themselves as they reflected upon the videos, stories, articles, and testimony of their fellow participants. From those personal takeaways, the teachers began to develop increased awareness of how privilege, racism, and discrimination were at play within American society in general. That finding is consistent with the SEED literature.

Finally, the SEED experience can be very emotional and, as Jadzia described it, incredibly "raw." SEED invites participants to examine their own biases and that process can create powerful cognitive dissonance within a person (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999). The SEED literature is replete with examples of SEED alumni who have confronted their own prejudices and lack of information on matters of diversity (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). All

three participants in this study described a process of reexamining their personal beliefs and, in some cases, the messages they received as a child from their parents, which is also consistent with previous SEED research.

Research question 2. This question was answered by three themes: Promoting understanding through teaching practice, Inclusion of diversity into curriculum, and a Greater willingness to have difficult conversations. Two of the interview participants described specific ways in which they have taken action to include more diversity within their curriculum. Julian and Kira have found creative ways to highlight cultural and ethnically relevant content in their teaching. Only one of the three, Jadzia, did not believe her content lent itself to an inclusion of diverse content, and the researcher is inclined to agree with her assessment based on the nature of her content area.

The decision to make curriculum more inclusive is generally consistent with the existing SEED research. Many PK-12 teachers, particularly in the areas of history, fine arts, and literature, have found innovative ways to add diversity into their course content. Indeed, Dr. Beverly Smith (1999), one of the three SEED dissertators, was inspired to study and write about SEED because she did not see any diverse content in her curriculum growing up. Therefore, the fact that two of this study's interview respondents were motivated to make changes may eventually empower their students because they will have seen themselves in their school's curriculum.

Finally, all three teachers described the ways in which their personal changes (e.g. more empathy, awareness, and understanding) has influenced the way that they teach (e.g. discussing privilege with students or co-workers and the ability to relate to diverse students). The fact that Jadzia, Kira, and Julian are more open and informed has allowed them to develop better

relationships with students they may not have understood before SEED, such as indigent students or Native American students. From SEED, the teachers described a deepened understanding of challenges facing students within the BRF School District in a multitude of diverse ways, including racial identity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This is overwhelmingly consistent with existing SEED research.

Research question 3. This question was answered by two themes: Professional motivations and Recruitment. This research question was both consistent with certain SEED literature and inconsistent with other aspects of the existent SEED research. For example, the themes of professional motivation and recruitment are similar to other sentiments expressed in the writings about the SEED experience.

Many teachers who have participated in SEED have had some external, professional incentive to join a SEED group. Indeed, in many of those instances, the literature indicates that participants were recruited by fellow teachers or district administrators. Therefore, the two resultant themes were largely consistent with prior SEED research.

However, where this study diverged from other SEED research was in terms of intrinsic motivation. Other studies, such as Wood et al. (2005) or Smith (1999) describe participants who joined because they had an interest in the topic. However, in this study, only one participant (Julian) mentioned a personal desire to engage in the work of SEED. It is reasonable to assume that a personal interest in learning about diversity was implied, but it was explicitly stated by only one of this study's participants.

Transformative learning theory. Transformative Learning Theory was developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978 as a means for examining the way that adults make meaning of their educational endeavors through a series of transformation phases (Daloz, 2000; Mezirow, 1978,

1981, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2003). The theory posits that the transformations adult learners experience empowers individuals to alter their frames of reference through critical reflections upon their own assumptions that inform their beliefs, prejudices, or perspectives (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow's original theory has been extensively discussed in the literature and has been used in many doctoral dissertations as a theoretical evaluative lens since the early 1980s (Newman, 2012). Many adult education experts have found the theory helpful in articulating the development that takes place in adults as they progress through postsecondary education (Christie et al., 2015; Mezirow, 2003; Newman, 2012).

Mezirow (1978) established nine specific phases of transformation in his original theory and has added more phases as he revisited and clarified his theory over time (Cranton & Kasl, 2012; Mezirow, 1991; Newman, 2012). In modern practice, however, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory consists of ten phases (Mezirow, 2000). In the following section, participants' responses will be broadly examined through each of Mezirow's ten phases of Transformative Learning Theory and the researcher will demonstrate how collected testimony was applicable to each phase.

Phase 1: A disorienting dilemma. The teachers described being shocked at the pervasiveness of racism, discrimination, and privilege within our collective society. They described their SEED experiences as being instrumental in illuminating their understanding of racism and oppression. In particular, the teachers pointed to the stories shared by Ho-Chunk members of their SEED seminar groups. "You think, 'My goodness. In this day and age, that happened to you? In this town? In this world?' [I'm just] so flabbergasted," said Jadzia.

Phase 2: Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame. The teachers interviewed for this study are all White, and most expressed a certain amount of guilt or shame

that was usually coupled with astonishment. For example, Julian considered himself open-minded, but when he learned more about the concept of privilege (especially White Privilege), he realized that he had been a beneficiary of that concept, which seemed to engender a small amount of guilt. The guilt was perceived by the researcher because Julian expressed, several times, that he did not share as much in the SEED seminars due to his concern that his experiences as a White man did not give him credibility to talk. "I would say...I wonder if they would take me seriously when I'm talking about privilege, when I would be one that would be considered privileged," said Julian.

Phase 3: A critical assessment of assumptions. As mentioned in chapter four, most of the interview subjects considered themselves open-minded with regard to diversity issues prior to participating in SEED. However, after their SEED experience, they went back to reexamine their own personal biases and prejudices that may have grown out of messages received as a child or beliefs that were developed during adulthood. "SEED kind of breaks down your upbringing," said Kira. "Your first informal teachers are your family...It's not always stuff that was said, but things you were shown...I've been teaching for several years and [I've been] taking a look at some of things I do."

Phase 4: Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. This aspect of Mezirow's theory was particularly evident in the teachers' responses. The entire SEED experience, in general, is based upon collective discovery and transformation (Bell, 1999; Smith, 1999). The BRF teachers' discontent and subsequent transformation was shared with their fellow SEED participants. "I hope that SEED is something that is part of our district for a long, long time. Because I think in our community it's especially needed, but I just think it's a really powerful process of [group] exploration and growth," said Jadzia.

Phase 5: An exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions. The creation of new roles was central to the experiences the interview respondents described in their testimony. Each shared that they developed new relationships with members of the community that they did not have before. The development of new relationships was not only between them and members of the Ho-Chunk community, but members of the White community in BRF as well. According to Kira:

> That small group that we had in SEED and doing those activities where we knew it was confidential in that group, helped people to open up and share their experiences. I really appreciated the different perspective from the age of people, the genders of people, it wasn't just a whole group of thirty-something female White teachers; it was so many different perspectives.

Phase 6: Planning a course of action. As mentioned in chapter four, at least two of the teachers interviewed in this study made the decision to include diversity into their curricula (Julian and Kira). In both cases, the two teachers determined what logical steps they could take to infuse their curriculum with multicultural or diverse elements. Ultimately, they were successful. Unfortunately, Jadzia was unable to find a way to add any diversity activities due to the nature of the courses she teaches.

Phase 7: Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans. Both Kira and Julian described SEED as inspiration for the modifications they made to their course content as discussed in chapter four. The knowledge acquisition and skill development that inspired the infusion of diverse content into their curriculum occurred within the monthly SEED seminars. In fact, Kira mentioned that she wanted to incorporate *more SEED-oriented activities* into her courses, but she feared they would not be appropriate for the age-level of her students.

Phase 8: Provisional trying of new roles. As previously highlighted in chapter four, one of the themes that emerged from the participants' testimony was a greater willingness to have difficult conversations. That willingness to discuss challenging subjects applied to their students, their colleagues (e.g. fellow teachers), and district administrators. Julian described an interest in helping students understand the role that privilege plays, subtly, without impressing his own views upon his students. Similarly, Jadzia discussed her interest in promoting SEED participation amongst her colleagues, but to do so in a gentle, encouraging way as not to offend anyone.

Phase 9: Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. As a result of the SEED seminars, and developing strong relationships with the fellow group members, the teachers suggested that their abilities to create connections with diverse people were enhanced and their confidence grew. For example, chapter four described an anecdote from Kira in her relationship with a Ho-Chunk student who was always tardy. She learned, through SEED, that the Ho-Chunk concept of time is different than mainstream American society's concept of time. As such, she was able to determine that, because the Ho-Chunk student is tardy for first period every day, it is unlikely he will ever earn certain merit-based privileges within the school. Her SEED experience helped her better relate to and understand that student's experiences and, perhaps, she will advocate for change in school policy at some point in the future.

Phase 10: A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. This phase is exactly what this study attempted to answer. Has SEED influenced the professional practice of BRF School District teachers? In the case of the three teachers interviewed for this dissertation, it appears as though SEED has influenced the way

teachers teach in a uniquely transformative way. As discussed previously, the teachers'

experience in SEED encouraged them to be more "empathetic" (Julian), "sensitive" (Kira), and

"aware" (Jadzia) of diversity issues that impact their students. These changes are now, according

to their testimony, a part of their current professional teaching practice. It is powerful to

consider how many students will be affected by the changes these teachers have been willing to

make in their content areas. Indeed, perhaps future students will be more accepting and more

sensitive to differences in others based upon the material they encounter in Kira and Julian's

classes.

　　　　Negative cases.　"The goal of negative case analysis is to refine the analysis until it

explains the majority of cases, which if a researcher is not careful, can result in forcing data into

themes and categories" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 478). The research collected in this

study does not appear to be substantially incongruent with the previous literature written about

the National SEED Project. However, there were several participant responses that did not

necessarily conform to the themes that emerged during data analysis.

　　　　Interestingly, there was limited data collected that did not align, specifically, with the

research questions or the emergent themes. Those negative cases also resulted in varied

responses from the interview participants. The data collected that does not seem to belong has

the potential to generate what Webb (2016) described as a mystery question. Based on the

negative cases of this study, that mystery question appears to be: What about SEED should be

changed to improve it in the future?

　　　　What about SEED should be changed to improve it in the future?　This topic produced

some disagreement amongst the respondents. For example, Julian suggested having fewer

topics, but wanted deeper exploration of the topics. Conversely, Kira wanted more topics

discussed in the SEED sessions. Some participants suggested adding incentives to encourage district personnel to participate, but they had divergent ideas on what those incentives should be (e.g. getting out of required professional development or having SEED serve as required professional development for all).

An additional negative case that emerged from this study was the concept of putting SEED into action. Chapter four has described the many ways that teachers have put SEED into action within their teaching, but those were individual plans that they created, as opposed to suggestions by SEED facilitators. The lack of a clear action plan for SEED alumni helped generate one of the researcher's recommendations that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Contributions and Conclusion

This study had the potential to make contributions to both educational theory and practice. Indeed, many scholars have argued that the overall purpose of the dissertation as the culminating experience of doctoral study is for the student to make an original contribution to a larger body of knowledge (Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Webb, 2016). This section outlines what the researcher believes are this study's original contributions to knowledge and the study's overall conclusion resultant from the data collected.

Contribution to theoretical knowledge. This study used Jack Mezirow's (1978) Transformative Learning Theory to examine the experiences of rural, Midwestern teachers' experiences in SEED. Chapter two provided extensive information about the theory, its evolution since it was posited, and some criticism of it within scholarly publications. Further, this chapter featured detailed descriptions of the ways in which the experiences of this study's participants related to each of the 10 phases of transformative learning.

The key concept to this study's original contribution to knowledge from a theoretical

standpoint is rooted in its unique setting. This study explores the impact that an adult learning experience (SEED) has had upon teachers' professional practice within a three-community context. To the author's knowledge, this is the only study that has used Transformative Learning Theory to describe the intersectional communities of a Native American Nation, a predominantly White community, and a largely biracial school district at the same time.

Contribution to professional practice. SEED has been in existence since 1987 and has been in operation in BRF since 2012. The research and data that has been collected and analyzed can provide meaningful information to the BRF SEED leadership regarding its impact upon district teachers. In addition, this study provides several recommendations, later in this chapter, for the programmatic improvement of BRF SEED in the future.

The information contained within this study has the potential to influence the way the BRF School District promotes and empowers its employees to participate in SEED based on the interview testimony of current teachers. The analysis of the teachers' professional takeaways from the SEED experience (e.g. greater empathy, sensitivity, and willingness to recognize and confront discrimination) could be of use to BRF School District administrators as they seek out future professional development opportunities for their staff. Finally, this study also may encourage current and future teachers within rural school districts with large minority populations to participate in SEED in order to enhance their understanding of issues related to diversity and inclusive education.

SEED in BRF is making a difference in the way teachers teach. Resultant from the data collected and analyzed in this dissertation, it is clear that SEED in BRF has been a transformative experience for teachers. The three participants interviewed for this study all spoke about how their personal takeaways from SEED (e.g. more empathy, understanding, and

awareness) have influenced the way that they teach. They believe they are more attuned to existing systems of privilege and discrimination that exist within our society than they were before. As such, they have stated that they make greater efforts to, as Jadzia said, "provide a voice for the voiceless."

This conclusion is congruent with existing SEED literature, but it is an original contribution to knowledge because SEED has never been analyzed in this context before. The intersectionality of the context (BRF, BRF School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation) makes this study singular in the existing body of knowledge. Adding to the importance of this study is the fact that 23% of the district's student population is Native American, and yet, nearly 100% of the district's faculty are non-Native American (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2017; Black River Falls School District, 2017a). Thus, a majority of the minority students within the district will be taught by a teacher who is a different race than they are. Therefore, access to meaningful professional development opportunities in diversity for BRF public school teachers is an absolute necessity.

Evaluation

The process of evaluating qualitative research can be tremendously difficult (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Webb, 2016). Indeed, many of the evaluative measures commonly associated with research are more closely related to the quantitative tradition. Qualitative research is an emergent form of scientific inquiry as opposed to quantitative research (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Sofaer, 1999; Webb, 2016). Therefore, how should one go about evaluating the merits of qualitative research? This section will highlight six techniques from Savin-Baden & Major (2013) and describe how this study fulfilled each criterion.

Reflexivity. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) describe the concept of reflexivity as something that "suggests the position or perspective of the researcher that shapes everything," (p. 474). This has been established in many instances throughout this dissertation. For example, in chapter one, the researcher clearly established a constructivist philosophy and the way he views the world. That constructivist philosophy also influenced the chosen research paradigm (hermeneutic phenomenology), the data collection method (interviews), and the interpretation of the resultant data as earlier mentioned in this dissertation.

Dense description of context. Context is paramount in qualitative research. Indeed, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) describe the need for "providing sufficient information about the culture and context within which the research is situated," (p. 480). Chapter two of this study established significant details about the three-community context in which this research was conducted. The intersection between the BRF community, the BRF School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation was discussed extensively, including detailed histories, challenges, and current demographic information.

Methodological coherence. "This technique involves ensuring congruence between the research questions, methods, data, and analytical processes," (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 477). The methods for this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study were well-established in chapter three of this dissertation. In that chapter, the researcher meticulously described the nature of qualitative research, discussed the variety of qualitative paradigms, discussed the relevance of phenomenology, and made a case for why hermeneutic phenomenology was most appropriate for this exploration of BRF SEED. In addition, the data collection (interview) procedures were carefully described and both of the interview protocols can be found in the appendices of this study. Chapter three also clearly established the process

by which data was analyzed.

Member checking. "This strategy involves checking with participants for feedback or verification of interpretation. As a result, the research is thought to be more credible," (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 477). The interview transcripts generated by Rev.com were sent to participants, individually, via email so that they could check to ensure that the transcript was accurate. Only one of the interview participants, Jadzia, decided to clarify her testimony as a result of reviewing the transcripts and the researcher's interpretation. Member checking also provided an additional opportunity to ensure the privacy of the respondents, as described in chapter four.

Negative case presentation. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) describe the importance of negative case studies as demonstration of a researcher's ability to think critically. Indeed, negative case studies "requires searching out data elements that do not support or actually contradict findings emerging during data analysis" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 478). This chapter's discussion section presented negative cases that emerged from the data collected through the interview process.

Researcher positionality statement. "Making positionality clear can provide the reader with the ability to determine whether bias has unncessarily influenced the results [of the study]," (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 479). Chapter three of this dissertation contained extensive statements about the researcher's connections to the topic, context, and research subjects. In addition, chapter three also described the author's level of experience conducting formal research and the implications that those realities could have on the results of the study.

Recommendations

This hermeneutic phenomenological study has explored the experiences of three

participants of the SEED Project in BRF. As such, the data collected during the course of this study have produced many recommendations for future action. The researcher's recommendations, based upon the testimony collected through the participant interviews, focus on three distinct areas: the BRF School District, the BRF SEED leadership, and future studies related to the BRF SEED phenomenon.

For the BRF School District. Each of the interview respondents voiced similar recommendations for the BRF School District with regard to SEED. In particular, respondents indicated that a formal relationship between SEED and the district would be beneficial. For example, the district could not only recommend to its faculty and staff that they participate in SEED, but that the district should takes steps to incorporate SEED into its current professional development. One respondent suggested using SEED in place of other professional development obligations (e.g. an inservice day) in order to promote participation. He believed that participation in SEED should remain voluntary for the teachers, but should be highly recommended by district leadership.

The development of a formal relationship between the BRF School District and BRF SEED (which is currently operated by the Ho-Chunk Nation) would help to address the need for diversity and inclusion training for PK-12 teachers mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation. Further, all respondents in this study mentioned that the ability to earn continuing education units (CEUs) that counted toward their license renewal was a significant motivational factor for participation. However, in 2017, the state of Wisconsin (where this study takes place) has begun offering "lifetime licenses" to educators, thus eliminating the need for licensed teachers to earn CEUs. It is possible that teachers' participation in SEED may decline resultant to the change in Wisconsin teacher licensure practices. However, a formal relationship between the BRF School

District and BRF SEED would mitigate that possibility.

For the BRF SEED leadership. In addition to recommendations for the school district, respondents also voiced suggestions for the SEED leadership. For example, many respondents recommended an increased emphasis on how to put SEED into action. There are many topics covered in the course of the nine-month SEED curriculum, but most respondents feel that clearer direction about what they, individually, can do to actualize the lessons learned through SEED would be beneficial. Essentially, respondents want to know how to use what they have learned.

Similarly, respondents described a desire to refresh their memories about what they experienced in SEED and get ideas about how they can use elements of SEED in their classrooms. Future iterations of the SEED Project in BRF should consider providing a flash drive or online portal that contains all of the materials used during a SEED seminar. Specifically, the flash drive would contain all the videos, activities, articles, and resources used throughout the nine-month SEED time frame so that alumni could use those resources in their classrooms.

Also, one teacher mentioned the importance of mixed-race facilitators (one Ho-Chunk and one White) in future iterations of SEED.   In her opinion, she felt that racial pluralism was ultimately representative of the group that she was a part of and helped "give voice to both groups." As SEED continues to expand within the BRF community, it is recommended that interracial facilitator duos be explored and implemented, as is realistically possible, in order to exemplify the unity SEED seeks to create within the community.

Finally, an additional recommendation is to follow-up with SEED participants/alumni after completion of the SEED seminar experience. The follow-up would be used to assess the effectiveness of the program, but also to check-in with the SEED alumni to see how they are

doing. Many respondents described the intense, personal nature of the SEED experience and seem to be interested in further connection with their group and facilitators after the SEED seminars have ended.

Future BRF SEED research. The researcher has three recommendations for further research on the SEED project in BRF based on the data collected for this study. This section will briefly discuss each recommendation for further study, including the suggested research methodologies. The three recommendations for future study of SEED in BRF are:

1. A narrative qualitative study that explores the stories of the non-teacher BRF SEED participants (Ho-Chunk and White community members)

2. A case study that focuses upon the experiences of the BRF SEED facilitators

3. An ethnographic study that examines the impacts of SEED through the lens of Ho-Chunk culture and social mores

A narrative inquiry approach. This study is a hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of the influence that SEED has had upon BRF School District teachers' professional practice. The researcher chose to focus upon upon teachers' experiences specifically because teacher training is one of the focuses of Career and Technical Education and SEED was originally designed as professional development for educators. Also, it was clear that the lack of longitudinal research on the outcomes of SEED in BRF was a problem that this dissertation attempted to address. However, research on the longitudinal influences that SEED has had upon its non-teacher participants also merits study.

Therefore, the researcher recommends that a narrative inquiry research paradigm be used to explore the experiences of non-teachers who have participated in BRF SEED. Narrative inquiry is ideal for future SEED research because it relies on written testimony, spoken words,

and visual expressions of individual people (Litchman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Further, narrative inquiry emphasizes the importance of a person's story (e.g. lived experiences), which is congruent with the serial testimony approach inherent in the SEED seminars (Litchman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Smith, 1999). The narrative inquiry approach will provide an opportunity for a greater understanding of the experiences of non-teacher participants in the BRF SEED project.

A case study approach. A case study is an extensive examination of a particular case or several cases (Litchman, 2013; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This qualitative research paradigm is apt for examining the experiences of one or two of the BRF SEED facilitators, especially for those who have been involved with SEED since it first came to BRF. Since 2012, the number of nationally trained SEED facilitators in BRF has grown from two to six (Michelle Cloud, personal communication, 2017). Thus, the SEED facilitators have helped shape the experiences of all SEED participants, which makes the facilitators' stories vital to fully understand BRF SEED.

There are many areas that a case study could explore. For example, a future case study could investigate what experiences drew the facilitator to SEED as a participant, what influenced the facilitator to seek training at the national level, the ways in which SEED seminar facilitation is distinct from that of a participant, to what extent their facilitation experiences have had upon them individually, and how their curriculum and/or approaches to the SEED seminars has evolved over time. Due to the large influence that SEED facilitators have in determining the SEED seminar curriculum, discussion topics, and their responsibility for maintaining respect by and for the seminar participants during difficult conversations, their influence on the SEED experience cannot be overstated.

An ethnographic approach. An ethnographic approach is exemplary because its purpose

is to "describe the culture and social interactions of a particular group or subgroup. It involves extensive immersion in a natural setting…" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 73). The Ho-Chunk Nation is one of the three communities earlier described in the context portion located in the second chapter of this dissertation. The Ho-Chunk People's origin story begins at Red Banks ("Mooga Shooch" in the Ho-Chunk Language), but historically, their aboriginal territory extended throughout much of Wisconsin (Funmaker, 1986; Jones et al., 2011; Loew, 2013; Radin, 1990). The Ho-Chunk have been in Wisconsin since the last ice age (Funmaker, 1986; Loew, 2013) and have unique cultural and social mores that create a unique perspective worthy of study.

The purpose of SEED is to discuss and promote inclusivity and diversity within the field of education (Bell, 1999; Hasegawa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wood et al., 2005). Historically, Native Americans in general, and the Ho-Chunk in particular, have experienced significant challenges with mainstream education in the United States (Fire, 2009; Guillory, 2008; Moody, 2013). Thus, further research that investigates the intersection of SEED and Ho-Chunk members' school experiences viewed through the lens of the Ho-Chunk culture may prove invaluable in determining future iterations of the program in BRF. The data gathered from this research may inform and improve the subsequent BRF SEED experience for all parties, including program administrators, facilitators, professional educators, enrolled Ho-Chunk member participants, and non-Ho-Chunk community member participants.

Final Summary

This hermeneutic phenomenological study has determined that voluntary participation in SEED has had a transformative impact upon the BRF public school teachers interviewed for this study and has influenced the way that they teach (e.g. teaching practices, the way they relate to diverse students, and the infusion of multiculturalism into their courses). This conclusion was

reached through a combination of several research activities, including an extensive search

through, and evaluation of, relevant scholarly literature as discussed in chapter two. Further, a

well-reasoned phenomenological methodology was employed to collect testimony from three

BRF public school teachers using open-ended questions in two semi-structured interviews, which

was followed by a thorough data analysis procedure as discussed in chapter three. From the

resultant data, participants' stories were presented in chapter four in such a way that the

interview subjects' voices could speak for themselves. Finally, chapter five of this study

described how the researcher summarized the data, drew conclusions about the data, and listed

recommendations for future practice and research related to SEED in BRF.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol 1

Project: *The influence of the national SEED project upon teachers' professional practice in a rural, Midwestern school district*

Time of interview: _____   **Date of interview:** _____

Location of interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interview Procedure
You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research study investigating the influence that voluntary participation in the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project in Black River Falls has had upon teachers' professional practice. During this interview, you will be asked to respond to open-ended questions. You may choose not to answer any or all of the questions asked to you by me, the researcher. The procedure of this interview will involve the audio recording of your answers and the recording will be transcribed verbatim by a third-party that is compensated by the researcher.

This interview is the first of two one-on-one interviews. In particular, this interview will focus upon two primary topics: the SEED seminars (monthly meetings) that you attended and the concept of privilege. Please be aware that your results will be kept confidential and you will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity when the data is reported. You also have the right to terminate this interview and/or your participation in this study at any time.

Informed Consent
Please sign the consent form I have given you. By affixing your signature to that document, you demonstrate that you understand the terms and are willing to participate in this study. Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

SEED in Black River Falls
It may have been some time since you participated in SEED, so let me refresh your memory about the program. The program consists of three-hour sessions that occurred monthly, concurrent with the school year. SEED discussed several different topics related to inclusive education, including privilege studies, racism, discrimination, homophobia, sexism, gender identity, etc. The facilitators of the program introduced you to the aforementioned topics and asked you to share your experiences through serial testimony, activities (e.g. the Privilege Walk), art work (e.g. drawings), and journaling.

Now that you have been briefly reacquainted with the SEED project, we will begin the interview if you are ready.

QUESTIONS

Part 1 – SEED

Warm-up: What did you know about SEED prior to participating?

1. Please tell me about your experience participating in SEED.

2. Could you tell me what motivated you to participate in SEED?

3. In what ways did your participation in SEED affect the way you teach, if at all? Please provide specific examples.

Question #3 prompts (if needed):
Could you please provide another example?

 Was there anything you wanted to implement in your teaching, but were not able to?

If so, what obstacles did you experience?

4. In what ways did your experience in SEED impact you on a personal level?

Question #4 prompts (if needed):
Were there any other ways in which SEED affected you on a personal level?

Do you think the changes you experienced influenced individuals close to you? (Ex: home life, spouse, children, church group, colleagues, etc.)

5. In your opinion, what is your biggest takeaway from participating in SEED?

Question #5 prompt (if needed):
Are there any other takeaways you would like to mention?

6. If you could change anything about your personal SEED experience, what would it be?

Question #6 prompt (if needed):
Would you be able to elaborate upon this?

7. Which aspects about SEED do you believe should remain the same?

Question #7 prompt (if needed):
Would you be able to elaborate upon this?

8. How can the SEED experience in Black River Falls be improved in the future?

Interviewer: Thank you for your responses to my first portion of questions, which focused upon your experiences with SEED. I will now move to questions about the concept of privilege, which has been an important part of the SEED curriculum in Black River Falls. In general, privilege studies explores the unearned advantages specific groups of people in society possess that other groups do not. The fundamental concept behind privilege studies is the notion that certain persons did not earn the rights and "cultural capital" they have; they have those assets because they were born into a privileged group.

Part 2 – Privilege

1. Would you please define the term "privilege" in your own words?

2. Could you describe what you learned about the concept of privilege in SEED?

3. Prior to SEED, had you ever studied or discussed the concept of privilege?

Question #3 prompt (if needed):
Where had you studied or discussed privilege?

4. To what extent was the concept of privilege a part of your teacher training in college?

Question #4 prompt (if needed):
Could you tell me about your diversity training in your teacher preparation?

5. Since becoming a teacher, how has the concept of privilege been discussed in your professional development?

Question #5 prompt (if needed):
What types of topics related to inclusive curriculum have you discussed in your professional development?

6. Since participating in SEED, how have you included the concept of privilege into your curriculum?

Question #6 prompt (if needed):
In what ways do you believe you could incorporate the concept of privilege into your current curriculum?

7. In your opinion, what role does the concept of privilege play in this school district?

Question #7 prompt (if needed):
In what ways do you observe privilege at work in the school district?

Closing Question
As we close this interview, is there anything that you would like to add to what you have already said?

Closing Remarks
Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate you taking the time to help me earn my doctorate. Please remember that this is the first interview of two and our second conversation will take place in the near future. Again, let me assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via telephone at

Appendix B: Interview Protocol 2

Project: *The influence of the national SEED project upon teachers' professional practice in a rural, Midwestern school district*

Time of interview: _____   **Date of interview:** _____

Location of interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interview Procedure
This is the second interview in my qualitative research study investigating the influence that voluntary participation in the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project in Black River Falls has had upon teachers' professional practice. During this interview, you will be asked to respond to open-ended questions. You may choose not to answer any or all of the questions asked to you by me, the researcher. The procedure of this interview will involve the audio recording of your answers and the recording will be transcribed verbatim by a third-party that is compensated by the researcher.

This interview is the second of two one-on-one interviews. In particular, this interview will focus upon the context of the study, which is the city of Black River Falls, the Black River Falls School District, and the Ho-Chunk Nation. Please be aware that your results will be kept confidential and you will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity when the data is reported. You also have the right to terminate this interview and/or your participation in this study at any time.

Informed Consent
You have signed an informed consent form prior to our last interview. Those conditions remain in effect for this interview unless you notify the researcher to the contrary. Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

Introduction
Thank you for your continued participation in my dissertation research. This is the second of two interviews that will be conducted. Last time, we focused on the influences that your SEED experience has had upon your professional life as a teacher in the school district. We also discussed the concept of privilege and your experiences with it. This interview will be different in that we will now have a conversation about the context of this study: the communities of Black River Falls, the school district, and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

If you are ready, we will begin our conversation.

QUESTIONS

Warm-up: Please tell me about the town in which you grew up.

Warm-up prompts (if needed):
How big was the city's population?

Was it culturally or racially diverse?

1. Could you please describe your relationship to Black River Falls (BRF)?

2. What were your impressions of BRF prior to participating in SEED?

Question #2 prompts (if needed):
What did you know about BRF before you moved here?

What attracted you to the community?

3. How have those impressions changed as a result of SEED?

Question #3 prompt (if needed):
How has SEED's emphasis on inclusion and diversity affected the way that you perceive the BRF community?

4. What were your impressions of the Ho-Chunk Nation/people prior to participating in SEED?

Question #4 prompt (if needed):
What did you know about the Ho-Chunk Nation and/or People before you moved here?

5. What are your impressions of the Ho-Chunk Nation/people after participating in SEED?

Question #5 prompt (if needed):
Could you please provide an example as to how SEED has influenced the way you perceive the Ho-Chunk Nation and/or People?

6. In what ways do you believe that SEED is valuable to the BRF and Ho-Chunk communities?

Question #6 prompt (if needed):
In what ways does SEED help make the community more inclusive and accepting of diversity?

7. What about SEED could be changed to make it more valuable to the BRF and Ho-Chunk communities?

8. What role do you think you play within the BRF community related to your SEED training?

Question #8 prompt (if needed):
Would you be able to give me an example of how you would use your SEED training in the community?

9. What role do you feel that you play within the school district as a classroom teacher related to your SEED training?

Question #9 prompt (if needed):
Would you please give me an example?

Do you believe your colleagues would be receptive to participating in SEED?

10. How would you describe the diversity in BRF when you began teaching in the district compared to the present?

11. Having completed SEED, how has it impacted your perspectives on diversity, if at all?

Closing Question
As we close this interview, is there anything that you would like to add to what you have already said?

Closing Remarks
Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate you taking the time to help me earn my doctorate. Again, let me assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via telephone at ███████████.

Appendix C: Participant Solicitation Request

[Date]

Dear prospective participant,

Greetings! This letter serves as my formal invitation to participate in my dissertation research. This research is to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Career and Technical Education degree at UW Stout. My dissertation is focused on a unique professional development experience for teachers, the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project, in which you participated recently.

The research will be conducted in the form of two separate interviews that will last between 45 and 60 minutes each. I will ensure that all of the information you share is kept confidential. You will have an opportunity to ask questions about the study and to sign an informed consent form prior to answering any questions.

In appreciation for your contribution to my research, I will compensate you in the form of a gift card at the end of the second interview.

If you are willing to participate in my research, please send a reply email to ███████████ ████████ to let me know. I will then work to schedule times for the two interviews that will be convenient for both of us. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcus F. Lewis

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title: "The Influence of the National SEED Project Upon Teachers in a Rural, Multicultural School District"	**Research Sponsor:** Diane Klemme, Ph.D. ████████████████████ ████ ███████ klemmed@uwstout.edu
Investigator: Marcus F. Lewis ████████ ██████████ ███████ lewism3205@my.uwstout.edu	

Description:
This research is to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Career and Technical Education degree at UW Stout. My dissertation is focused on a unique professional development experience for teachers called the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project. I have identified three guiding research questions:

1. To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the professional practice of Black River Falls School District teachers?
2. What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced Black River Falls School District teachers to make?
3. What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the Black River Falls SEED Project?

Risks and Benefits:
Limited Risks – The Black River Falls School District is relatively small in that it employs approximately 150 faculty members. Therefore, the researcher will take extra precautions to protect faculty identities such as pseudonyms, larger age ranges (e.g. 30-40 years old), larger ranges for number of years of district employment (e.g. less than 10 or more than 10), and an avoidance of mentioning the subjects the participants teach (e.g. English or chemistry).

Further, an additional risk is that a participant may recall an unpleasant experience during the course of the interview that may cause them discomfort.

Limited Benefits – This study will contribute to the academic literature related to multicultural and inclusive education professional development for teachers in rural areas. Further, an integral part of this study is the fact that 22% of the Black River Falls School District is Native American (mostly Ho-Chunk), that this study has the potential to contribute to the conversation regarding meaningful professional development for teachers working with Native American populations. This research could potentially benefit school districts with high populations of Native American students and non-Native American teachers and, consequently, Native American students within those districts.

Time Commitment and Payment:
The researcher will interview each participant individually. Interviews will be semi-structured using open-ended questions that explore your experiences with the National SEED Project. The expected time commitment is 45 to 60 minutes for each of the two interviews. All participants will be compensated with a gift card in the amount of $20.00 in appreciation for their contribution to this study. The gift card will be given to the participant immediately after the second interview is concluded.

Confidentiality:
Participant names will not be included on any documents. I do not believe that participants can be identified from any of this information. This informed consent will not be kept with any of the other documents completed with this project.

Right to Withdraw:
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Anyone may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. Should individuals choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, they may discontinue their participation at this time without incurring adverse consequences.

IRB Approval:
This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator: Marcus F. Lewis ██████████████ ████████████████ ██████████ lewism3205@my.uwstout.edu	**IRB Administrator** Elizabeth Buchanan Office of Research and Sponsored Programs 152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg. UW-Stout Menomonie, WI 54751 ██████████ Buchanane@uwstout.edu
Advisor: Diane Klemme, Ph.D. █████████████████████ ██████ █████████ klemmed@uwstout.edu	

Statement of Consent:

By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, "The Influence of the National SEED Project Upon Teachers Professional Practice in a Rural Midwestern School District."

_____   _____
Participant signature   Date

_____   _____
Investigator signature   Date

Appendix E: UW-Stout IRB Approval

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
152 Vocational Rehabilitation

University of Wisconsin-Stout
P.O. Box 790
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

Phone: 715-232-1126

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
STOUT
WISCONSIN'S POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

August 25, 2017

Marcus F. Lewis
Doctor of Education in Career/Technical Education
University of Wisconsin-Stout

RE: The Influence of the National SEED Project Update on Teachers in a Rural, Multicultural School District

Dear Marcus:

The IRB has determined your project, *"The Influence of the National SEED Project Update on Teachers in a Rural, Multicultural School District"*, is **Exempt** from review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The project is exempt under **Category #2** of the Federal Exempt Guidelines and holds for 5 years. Your project is approved from **August 25, 2017** through **August 24, 2022**. If a renewal is needed, it is to be submitted at least 10 working days prior to the approvals end date. Should you need to make modifications to your protocol or informed consent forms that do not fall within the exemption categories, you will need to reapply to the IRB for review of your modified study.

Informed Consent: All UW-Stout faculty, staff, and students conducting human subjects' research under an approved "exempt" category are still ethically bound to follow the basic ethical principles of the Belmont Report: 1) respect for persons; 2) beneficence; and 3) justice. These three principles are best reflected in the practice of obtaining informed consent from participants.

If you are doing any research in which you are paying human subjects to participate, a specific payment procedure must be followed. Instructions and form for the payment procedure can be found at http://www.uwstout.edu/rs/paymentofhumanresearchsubjects.cfm

If you have questions, please contact the IRB office at 715-232-1126, or ███████████, and your question will be directed to the appropriate person. I wish you well in completing your study.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Buchanan

Interim Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB)

CC: Diane Klemme

Appendix F: Code Sheet

1. Aspects to keep
2. Big picture
3. Building connection with SEED members
4. Building trust with students
5. Changing demographics
6. Choosing words carefully
7. Colleagues
8. Combatting stereotypes
9. Community interaction
10. Community involvement
11. Context
12. Creating a welcoming place for students
13. Cultural awareness
14. Diversity training (pre-service)
15. Diversity training (professional development)
16. Family friction
17. Future improvements
18. Gaining perspective
19. Gender identity
20. Growing up
21. Helping others on their journey
22. Ho-Chunk Nation
23. Ho-Chunk Nation and the community
24. Ho-Chunk Nation and the district
25. Impressions of BRF
26. Incorporating diversity into courses
27. Incorporating privilege into curriculum
28. Increased tolerance
29. Insight on grade center influence
30. Introduction to diversity
31. New perspectives
32. Outreach
33. Peer-directed learning
34. Perceptions of BRF
35. Personal definitions of privilege
36. Personal growth
37. Perspective
38. Prejudice is taught
39. Privilege
40. Privilege training
41. Promoting awareness
42. Putting SEED into action
43. Recognizing racism
44. Recruitment
45. Recruitment – getting involved
46. Recruitment – people to invite
47. Resistance to diversity in schools from students
48. Resistance to privilege
49. SEED in curriculum
50. SEED in professional practice
51. Self-reflection
52. Strong emotions
53. Students lack sensitivity
54. Takeaways from SEED
55. The journey
56. The sensitivity gap between home and school
57. Unintended discrimination

Appendix G: Themes By Research Question

To what extent has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced the practice of Black River Falls School District teachers?

1. Increased Awareness of Diversity Issues
2. Building connections
3. Recognition of Privilege and Discrimination
4. Deeper understanding of self

What specific changes in their teaching practice has voluntary participation in the SEED project influenced Black River Falls School District teachers to make?

1. Promoting Understanding Through Teaching Practice
2. Inclusion of diversity into curriculum (Literature, food, new course)
3. Greater willingness to have difficult conversations

What experiences influenced teachers' decision to participate in the Black River Falls SEED Project?

1. Professional Motivations
2. Recruitment