



# Analyzing Sources of Bias for Teacher Preparation

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## Abstract

The teacher candidates are seeking to answer the following research questions:

- How have past experiences impacted prejudice?
- How will this realization impact the future classroom?

Teacher candidates analyzed memory triggers for sources of bias, contextualized it in regard to systemic inequities, and then focused on developing a course of action to address these sources of bias.

## Introduction

In a time period where educators are still overwhelmingly White, female, and middle-class while our student population changes at a rapid pace, one can clearly see that prejudice unaddressed will be at the detriment of our future students.

To fully engage in these conversations, we needed to operate from the same foundation with regard to terminology.

Common definitions help to cool the flare of emotions that comes up. Prejudice is simply **the “learned prejudgment about members of social groups to which we don’t belong.** Prejudice is based on limited knowledge or experience with the group. Simplistic judgments and assumptions are made **and projected onto everyone from that group”** (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pg. 51).

Another definition that we must agree on for the purpose of using this method of critical self-reflection is discrimination. Discrimination is **“action based on prejudice toward others.** When we act on our prejudgments, we **are discriminating”** (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pg. 54).

## Purpose

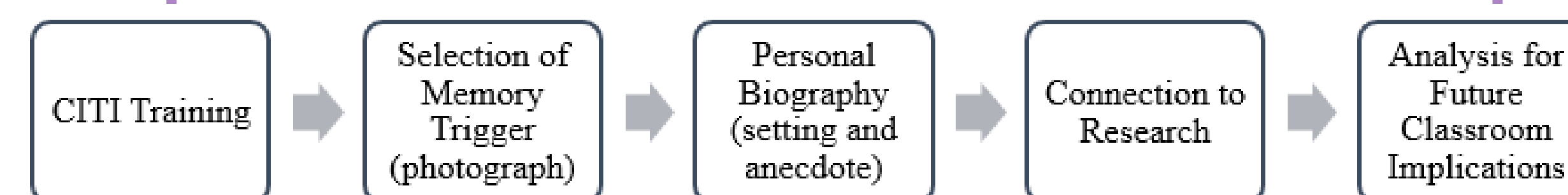
The purpose of this study is for pre-service teachers to begin the process of critical self-reflection that is so necessary as they begin to gain more autonomy in their field placements and student teaching.

However, a critical self-awareness is merely the first step. To truly understand the prejudice that a person has, one must seek to discover *why* this prejudice exists and from *where* it comes. Prejudice is internal and it can be argued that an internal belief does not have an impact on external relationships. Prejudice, unfortunately, often manifests as discrimination or prejudice.

If a teacher can authentically examine his/her/their prejudice, then perhaps the outcome can be a less discriminatory classroom culture.

## Materials & Methods

Our methodology is an autoethnographical reflection based on a critical social justice theoretical frameworks. Through the process they are analyzing their own biases, connecting them systematically and hopefully using them to strive to improve the writer, reader, and culture at large (Adams, Holman, & Ellis, 2013).



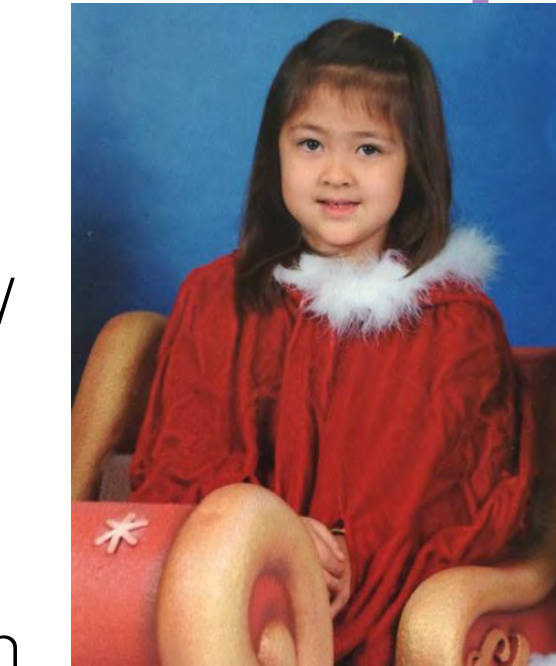
Teacher candidates began by selecting a memory trigger that we had access to from our cell phones, social media pages, or home photo albums. Then, we had an opportunity to write about the memory and about the setting in which this memory occurred. Next, we worked to make meaning of this experience by grounding it in research or connecting it to some form of informed knowledge. Lastly, we used these memories to construct a potential positive outcome for their future students.

## Results

### Amy’s Story

My story is addressing the assumption of a common cultural identity that my family simply **did not share with the “traditional American family.”** Despite it just being a simple miscommunication, it is a larger issue of teachers not understanding family situations. In a documentary called *Cracking the Code: The System of Racial Inequity*, Butler (2014) discussed how miscommunications arise by not being attentive to **everyone’s needs. As an educator or someone in a leadership position must understand the circumstances of the people that they are working with.**

I still remember this incident vividly, but what it made me realize was that as an educator we have to accommodate for everyone from all walks of life. My mom **didn’t know better. She didn’t know what the teachers wanted,** but all of the other English native moms knew exactly what the teacher meant. Even just minor issues like this put non English speaking parents at a disadvantage, and their students don’t know any better than just to follow their parents lead. This can create social issues for the student if their peers make fun of them, like mine did, and **also unintentionally hinder the student’s ability to be a part of activities.**



### Kendall’s Story

My story is addressing the systemic discrimination of students labeled with learning disabilities. Story Sauer and Jorgensen (2016) elaborate on the flaws in the LRE mandate and the requirement for a continuum, noting the disproportionate segregation of certain students with disabilities, such as students with intellectual disabilities, results in disproportionately limited school experiences. They link the cultural practice of segregating students with more obvious **disabilities or intensive support needs to society’s devaluation of disability, also known as “ableism.”** The schools segregate the students that have disabilities with the ones who do not have disabilities.

I will not let my students feel like they are different from the other students because I know how they feel, and I do not want them to feel what I felt like. I am relating my experiences of being segregated from my peers for my learning differences is that I will not let other students feel like they are stupid the way I felt I will make my class environment and environment for all students no matter what beliefs, learning difference, or any kind of difference they have from the other kids in my class.



## Results (cont.)

### Alexa’s Story

My story addresses the lack of awareness for students dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues. According to Noddings (1999), **“...as we engage our students in dialogue, we learn about their needs, working habits, interests, and talents. We gain important ideas from them about how to build our lessons and plan for their individual progress.”** In other words, the more we get to know the child and the more we care for them, as teachers, we will get a better understanding of how to help the students and what we will need to do to help them succeed. Finding the students interest can help us do our jobs a lot easier. We will be able to know how to teach the child based on the **student’s interest. And that’s what Mrs. Santander did, she found something that most of us liked and had us hooked from the minute she showed us.**



Students who feel authentically cared for will begin to feel more comfortable in class. When students are not operating at increased levels of stress, they will be able to dedicate more focus to the lessons at hand. By prioritizing care as an educator, students dealing with anxiety will have one less reason to be triggered in the classroom.

## References

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