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Race *Still* Matters: Preparing Culturally Relevant Teachers

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores racial identity development of teacher candidates during a teacher preparation program dedicated to preparing teachers for diverse classrooms. Two black teacher candidates in the United States demonstrate their racial identity development through critical reflections offered throughout the program. Findings suggest that teachers' racial identities shaped their constructions of culturally relevant (CR) pedagogy. Implications for teacher education programs include considering how the development of CR pedagogues is influenced by teacher candidates' racial identities and experiences.

Keywords: culturally relevant teachers, racial identity, black teacher candidates

I could tell you
If I wanted to
What makes me
What I am
But I don't
Really want to—
And you don't
Give a damn

(Hughes, Rampersad, and Roessel 1994)

This article examines how the racial identities of two black¹ teacher candidates (hereafter called “candidates”) influence developing conceptions about culturally relevant (CR) teaching during a two-year baccalaureate teacher preparation program. This qualitative study presents an undertold story of how teachers’ race—and their racialized identities— influences their developing conceptions about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This study adds to the growing literature about how teacher education programs can show that they “give a damn” about the unique racial experiences black candidates bring to teacher education programs and how these experiences shape and influence their preparation as CR teachers.

Literature review

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is an ideology that “empower[s] students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Grant and Ladson-Billings 1997, 18). To effectively implement a CR *and* sustainable pedagogy, schools and teachers must first believe that all students can succeed, maintain an affirming student-teacher relationship and see excellence as a complex standard that accounts for student diversity and individual difference (Paris 2012). CRP connects classroom learning to children’s home experiences and native languages (Ladson-Billings 2014). This cultural understanding of students (family traditions, customs, etc.) alone, however, is not sufficient. Despite evidence of candidates becoming more aware of racial diversity in our society (Castro 2010), teacher educators still face the challenge of preparing candidates who can provide high-quality, responsive educational experiences for all children. CR teachers bring a conscious understanding of the cultural, historical, social, and political context of teaching and student learning. Therefore, a critical element of CRP is the “politically relevant teaching” that intentionally creates opportunities for liberatory educational experiences that combat racial injustice, oppression, and inequitable schooling experienced by students of color (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 1999). Academic achievement and success is maximized when children experience CRP (Ladson-Billings 1999).

While researchers demonstrate that teachers of color can achieve better results from students of color on academic achievement tests (e.g., Goldhaber and Hansen 2010), very few studies have validated this claim by showing better teaching methods. Therefore, methods alone cannot account for these results. CRP entails relational, curricular, *and* ideological dimensions. CR teachers are not all of color, and not all teachers of color are CR. A CR teacher, regardless of his or her racial or cultural origin, has a conscious understanding of systemic inequities and structures that impact the success and opportunities of *racially* diverse students (Beauboeuf-LaFontant 1999; Foster 1990, 1997). Therefore, we argue rather than a focus in teacher education on only becoming knowledgeable of students’ culture, the focus instead should be on examining teacher candidates’ understandings of how students’ racial identity in the United States inevitably predisposes them to certain struggles or opportunities.

Focusing on race

Identity markers—such as a teacher’s race, culture, class, and gender—influence interactions and relationships with students, curricular choices, and academic expectations (Bhopal and Rhamie 2014). Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) compared achievement scores of students in white and black teachers’ classrooms and found that black students did consistently better when placed in black teachers’ classrooms, regardless of how well teachers did on their state licensure test. Scholars have argued that racially shared experiences explain why teachers of color have higher expectations and positive perceptions of minority children, and forge meaningful relationships with these students, essential elements for academic achievement (Hilliard 1997, 2000) and CRP. Scholars also argue that teachers of color are conscious of the “hidden curriculum” that impacts students of color and thereby urge students to invest in learning and explicitly explain the political and social justice benefits (Foster 1990). Thus, some teachers of color may have knowledge about the cultural norms and values that can define how students of color interact in schools and thus be better at mediating those norms in order to support academic achievement. The connection between racial knowledge and cultural knowledge may be what supports extant findings.

Research demonstrates that black candidates bring multiple perspectives to multicultural teaching (Brown 2014; Ladson-Billings 1999) and share a worldview of interdependence, cooperation, and collective responsibility with their black students (Hilliard 1997). Hollins and Guzman (2005) suggest that candidates of color are more likely than their white peers to pursue teaching with social justice goals. In contrast, white candidates may be less familiar with the home experiences and realities of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and may consider white and Asian children more teachable (Sleeter 2008). Research suggests that white candidates express lower expectations and negative attitudes toward children of color (Goldhaber and Hansen 2010; Sleeter 2008), enter teacher education programs with little exposure to and awareness of cultural and racial diversity (Banks 2004; Villegas and Davis 2008), and when prompted to examine their racial identities display “dysconscious” beliefs about racism and its impact on teaching and learning (King 1991; Picower 2009). These findings suggest that teacher preparation programs must consider whether we differentiate preparation for candidates across racial groups and how. Such considerations leave teacher educators asking how race informs a teacher candidate’s developing conception of CRP and what this may mean for teacher education. This study describes how candidates’ conceptions of CRP were influenced by their evolving racial identities throughout the teacher education program. We provide important advice for teacher educators as they encourage black teacher candidates to construct ideas about CR teaching.

Racial identity in teacher education

Individual identities involve how persons categorize themselves, associate with others, and compare themselves to others (Brown 2006; Holland et al. 2001). Identity development is socially mediated, meaning that one’s identities are formed by others as much as they are formed by oneself—through discourse, interaction, and experiences with others (Brown 2006; Holland et al. 2001). Identity is an elusive construct, continuously shifting in response to one’s experiences. Racial identity formation is similarly complex.

Racial identity development involves the psychological response to one's race constructed within socially mediated spheres of influences (Brown 2006). How a person feels about his or her racial identity is connected to a psychological orientation toward his or her racial group, the political meanings attached, and how that person is viewed in society, both historically and presently. For example, hegemonic racial dichotomies in describing whiteness and blackness permeate American society; whiteness is viewed as a normalized, neutral standard, and blackness is often viewed with negative stereotypes like lazy, at-risk, and violent. These stereotypes often position black people in society; in the words of James Baldwin (1955) "No people ever come into possession of a culture without having paid a heavy price for it." Therefore, as a result of the socially constructed nature of one's identity, racial categories defined by society create both "chosen" and "unchosen" racial identities for individuals (Winkle-Wagner 2009). Both participants in this study self-identified as black, allowing an in-depth exploration of how one's racial awareness influences the development of CR black teachers.

One of the most widely known and used black identity models is Cross's model of Nigrescence (Cross 1978, 1992) which describes five stages of racial identity of African American cultural and experiential influences (Cross, Parham, and Helms 1991). More recently, researchers suggest new dimensions of black racial identity development (Sellers et al. 1998). Sellers and colleagues (1998) developed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) framework to capture both the cultural and historical experiences of what it means to be black. As presented in figure 1, MMRI proposes four dimensions of racial identity: racial salience, centrality, regard, and ideology.

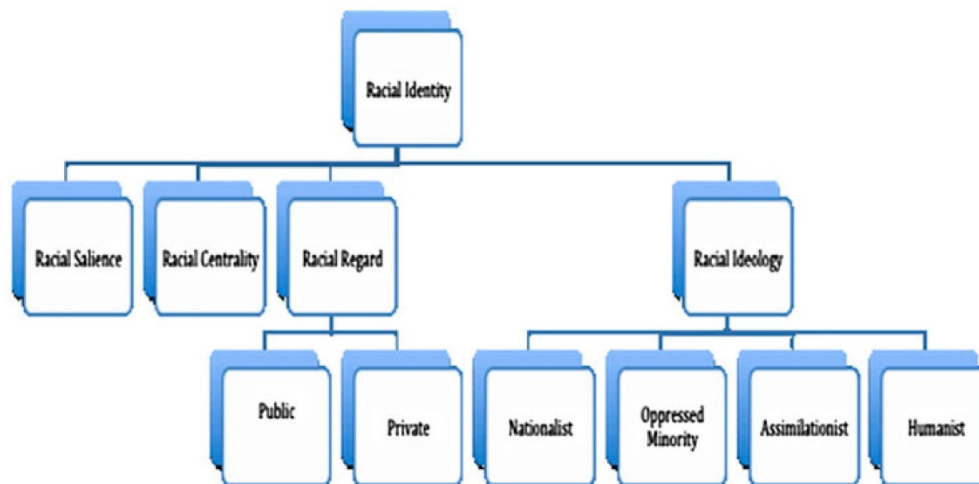


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity

Racial salience is the degree to which one's race is relevant to overall self-concept and experiences and is the mediating factor in interpreting one's position within racial groups. Race becomes more or less salient depending on the individual and situation. Take, for

instance, a black woman doctor working in an all-white male medical practice serving predominantly white patients—we'll call her Brenda. In this work environment, there may be experiences that force Brenda to consider the racial differences between herself, her patients, and colleagues (i.e., a white patient requesting to be seen by one of her colleagues). If race were not salient to Brenda, she might consider this request to be a result of her being female instead of black.

Racial centrality refers to the degree of significance one attaches to race as a prevailing identity in defining self across situations. For instance, if gender rather than race was the more defining identity for Brenda, she may feel more belonging in a group focused on women's issues than one exclusively for minority medical professionals.

Racial regard is one's public and private feelings about racial groups. Brenda may have private feelings about black people that are both positive and negative; however, she may exhibit a public identity that promotes a positive, nonstereotyping image of black people, particularly black women. Brenda's racial regard is likely to be influenced by her own racial salience and centrality—if she has positive connotations with being black, then she may also feel a sense of racial centrality.

Racial ideology refers to the individual's perceptions of how members of a racial group should act. Sellers et al. (1998) present several ideological views including "nationalist," "oppressed minority," "assimilationist," and "humanist." A nationalist views the black experience differently from any other cultural group. One with a nationalist ideology prefers African American social environments and appreciates the accomplishments and culture of African Americans. Oppressed minority ideology attempts to uncover and examine the shared experiences of cultural groups impacted by oppression. Individuals who espouse this ideology are interested in African American culture and the culture of other minority groups. Similarly, the assimilationist perspective focuses on the shared experiences of African Americans and other cultural groups (particularly white Americans). However, assimilationists value working within and adapting to the mainstream system instead of critiquing or explicitly identifying racists and oppressive practices and structures. Lastly, the humanist ideology focuses on the similarities among all humans. Race is of minute importance to how we view the world. Humanists are more likely to emphasize the individual personal characteristics rather than a group identity such as race, gender, or class.

The MMRI framework provides a lens for understanding how racial identity may influence ideas and behaviors, such as teaching. As stated by Sellers et al., "African Americans [blacks] differ in the level of significance race plays" (30). Given the different trajectories for black identity development, teacher education requires a continued focus on racial implications of teacher development, especially as related to CRP.

Different trajectories for white and black teacher candidates

More than a decade ago, Sleeter (2001) admonished how teacher education research has an "overwhelming presence of whiteness." This also holds true for examining the place of race in teacher development. With few exceptions (Bhopal and Rhamie 2014; Garrett and Segall 2013), most strategies have been developed to appeal to white racial identity development (Picower 2009). For example, critical reflectivity provides opportunities for candidates to reflect on their prejudices, biases, and ideological beliefs about diverse student

populations (Gay and Kirkland 2003). However this practice focuses almost exclusively on how white teacher candidates reflect upon their racially motivated beliefs and experiences, thus excluding the importance of providing black teacher candidates with opportunities to also understand how race and cultural practices influence them in “traditional and evolving ways” (Paris and Alim 2014, 90). Furthermore, black identity development seems to require additional strategies for teacher education. Our study builds upon current literature by exploring in depth the connection between critical reflection, racial identity development, and black candidates’ conceptions of CRP.

Methods

Research questions

In this study, we examined two elementary teacher candidates’ conceptions of CR teaching via their spoken and written reflections. This article focuses on two black candidates to examine how black racial identity might vary within teacher education. Given the research about the interrelatedness of pedagogy and identity, we wondered whether and how racial identities might emerge. We asked: What do elementary candidates’ reflections reveal about racial identity development, and how might their racial identities contribute to developing conceptions about CR teaching?

Case study methodology

Qualitative case study approach (Lincoln and Guba 1985) was most fitting because it allowed for in-depth examination of individuals’ critical reflections across various settings and in multiple modes (writing and speaking) over a two-year period (the length of their teacher education program). We examined the developmental *process* of identity and conceptual constructions as opposed to focusing on outcomes.

Context

Participants were enrolled in a two-year elementary teacher certification program in an urban university in the southern United States. Candidates in the program ($n = 22$) were 74% white, 23% African American, and 4% Asian. Candidates took classes together in a cohort and participated in sequenced, daily field placements in grades pre-K–5th aligned with coursework. One three-credit-hour “diversity course” focused exclusively on CRP. The other courses were about content-area pedagogy and instruction, such as literacy, social studies, classroom management, and assessment. Content-area course instructors explicitly and implicitly focused on CRP as essential to content-area instruction in urban school contexts. Thus, this research study focused on the candidates’ conceptions of CR teaching throughout their program.

Sampling procedures

Sampling procedures began at the time participants were taking the cultural diversity course (two semesters prior to this study). All teacher candidates ($n = 22$) in the course were given a questionnaire by Love and Kruger (2005) to identify where their beliefs about diversity fell. The questionnaire contained 48 CR and assimilationist statements presented

on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Answers were used to code each respondent into one of three categories as established by Love and Kruger (2005): CR, culturally relevant/assimilationist (CRA), or culturally assimilationist (CA). Using the data from the questionnaire and observational data collected a year prior in the diversity course (group interviews, reflective blogs, and observations), a sample pool of six teacher candidates (two representing each category—CR, CRA, CA) was formed. Using this pool, we selected the case study participants based on age in order to represent the age range of the cohort (ages 21–49).

Once we completed the selection process, we asked the participants to explain their questionnaire responses during the first interview. When given extended opportunities to talk about their beliefs, no participant fell easily into their initially scored category. It is important to emphasize that the Love and Kruger (2005) questionnaire was developed to measure the CR beliefs of teachers who teach primarily African American children in urban public schools. Our work focused on PSTs preparing to teach children representing a broader range of ethnic diversity. Consequently, we abandoned the sample CRP marker and instead let the data collected (interviews, observational data and work samples) guide the work. Ultimately, the PSTs selected as case study participants were indeed very different in their beliefs. Since the focus of this manuscript is to present the racial identity experiences of black teacher candidates as they develop towards CR teaching, two cases are presented: Carla and Ronald (pseudonyms used). Not surprisingly, their beliefs were complex and dynamic representations of their lived experiences.

Ronald, a 21-year-old black male, was born in a working-class family in the South. He attributed his interest in pursuing an early childhood education degree to his quest for serving as a change agent for his community and an advocate for children. According to the results of the questionnaire, Ronald felt strongly that each child is a unique composite of his or her racial, cultural, home, and peer experiences. He felt a responsibility to make connections between what happens in the world to these experiences.

Carla, a 29-year-old black female, was also born in a working-class family in the South. Prior to pursuing her interests in teaching children, she traveled internationally as a US naval officer. Carla attributed her knowledge and appreciation of other cultures to her travels abroad and growing up in a multiracial community. Carla had a “color-blind” stance at the beginning of the study, stating that she does not see race in the classroom.

Data collection

We collected data throughout the teacher education program. Three sources made up the data set: (1) three semistructured individual interviews; (2) eight course documents; and (3) two member-checking written records. Descriptive memos were also created from the interview and document data to include researchers’ initial hunches and comments and to summarize the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Three interviews elicited the teachers’ beliefs and reflections on CRP. The first interview began with questions prompted by participants’ responses to the questionnaire (Love and Kruger 2005). For example, one of the questionnaire statements was “I don’t see color in my classroom, I just see children.” Therefore, an interview prompt was:

When you hear the phrase “I don’t see color in my classroom, I just see children,” what are your thoughts? Also, you stated in the questionnaire that students’ cultural backgrounds play an important part in teaching. How? How do you define cultural backgrounds?

Eight weeks later, candidates participated in a second interview to discuss the implementation of a lesson plan each identified as CR. Their third interview, conducted at the end of their teacher education program, captured the candidates’ experiences with and understandings of CRP. All interviews were semistructured and lasted approximately one hour.

Eight course documents were collected from the four required courses participants were taking at the time of the study. Course documents offered an opportunity to explore and analyze the candidates’ written reflections and triangulate those reflections with their spoken (interview) reflections. Also, with the assistance of the course instructors, we selected assignments from the courses that either explicitly asked participants to reflect on the teaching and/or learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students or had a broader focus on diverse students. We intentionally selected assignments that were identified by the course instructors as helping students to reflect upon and implement CRP for two reasons. First, we were interested in examining course assignments that *prompted thinking* on issues related to oppression, racism, or educational inequity within the context of learning to teach culturally diverse students. Second, we were interested in examining the teacher candidates’ reactions to and reflections on course experiences when culture and/or race was not explicitly the foci of the assignment or activity (i.e., reflections on development of unit lesson plan).

Two member checks allowed candidates the opportunity to respond to, clarify, and extend the results of preliminary and final data analysis. During these member check conversations, Durden, the primary researcher shared preliminary findings and confirmed interpretations of the data collected. During these conversations, participants expanded and extended information from the other data sources, and therefore “new” data emerged and were recorded. These member-checking written records were important data sources because they further chronicled the developmental process as participants constructed concepts about CR teaching.

Data analysis

Data representing candidates’ beliefs about a particular topic ranged from one sentence to a page and a half and were taken from interview transcripts or written records. After units were identified, the first level of topical analysis identified statements (spoken and/or written) in which participants referred to CRP/teaching philosophies, instructional methods, personal histories, institutional/political ideologies, and/or culturally and linguistically diverse students. For the second level of coding, we described each participant’s racial identity development and understandings about CR teaching. For example, Ronald reflected on how best to teach linguistically diverse students, or what he referred to as the “new minority.” He reflected:

When I was in elementary school I remember we had like the black kids, and you know we were known as the minority, minority, minority. But now things have really evolved that you have kids that came from Mexico or from these Latin American countries and now they're the minority, minority, minority . . . times have changed to now we have new minority students but how do we reach these students?

In the first tier of coding, this example was coded as "personal racial experiences." The second tier of coding suggested that this quote demonstrated his attempt to first connect the "minority" experiences he faced as a black elementary student with those of his current students from a different minority group in order to consider how best to teach and connect with these students. Descriptive memos were written throughout the analysis process to track emergent findings and themes but were not analyzed.

Trustworthiness and limitations

Several methods were used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. Durden collected data over an extended period to allow for prolonged engagement (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Triangulation of multiple data sources (interview transcripts, course assignments, and member-checking written records) offered supporting evidence for the findings. Furthermore, we regularly reflected on how our own beliefs and biases influenced data interpretation in order to authentically capture the participants' voices. Durden then conducted two member-checking conversations with each participant to share tentative interpretations of the data. Finally, peer debriefing helped to confirm coding during the within-case and cross-case analyses.

However, as for all research studies, limitations are important to consider. These cases are not intended to be generalized across all teachers but rather to give nuance to extant theories and research about racial identities and the preparation of CR teachers. Also, findings do not indicate strict developmental progressions in identity formation nor pedagogy beyond the teacher preparation program. When examining candidates' work, there is always the dilemma of whether the students are telling the instructors what they want to hear. Thus, we hope that by connecting candidates' reflections across several courses, instructors, and assignments, we captured a genuine glimpse of how their racialized identities relate to understandings of CR teaching.

A final caveat: In this study, we purposely selected course assignments that *required* candidates to reflect on race. One's racial identity development is dynamic, socially mediated, and contextually variable. Therefore, when exploring the racial identity development in this study, we acknowledge the influences and interactions of their other identities as well. And we note that the interviews and written reflections themselves became racially and socially constructed "spaces" for participants. We positioned these teachers as racial beings, and, thus, to some extent may have contributed (however unintentionally) to their racial identities simply by positioning them as such.

Findings

In this study we examined the relationship between multiple influences shaping two black candidates' racial identities and their conceptions of CR teaching. Through critical reflection opportunities (via interviews, written assignments, and member checking), these candidates made explicit statements about their identity development as CR teachers. In this section, we reveal how a candidate's reflections represented his or her racial identity development, how his or her identities related to CR teaching, and influences of racial identity as mediating his or her development as a CR teacher.

Ronald

Ronald is a black male teacher who is aware of the educational, political, and social implications of being black in American society. In Ronald's reflections, he consistently drew upon two identities (gender and race) when expressing his conceptions of CR teaching.

Ronald's racial identity formation

Ronald grappled with his position as a black male educated in a CA educational system. He grew up in an all-black community and attended all-black elementary and middle schools. Ronald reflected how his former teachers (white and black) made few attempts to connect instruction to his home experiences, and many projected negative beliefs and had low expectations of him. He was told "[You] won't make it to middle school" and attributed his teachers' low expectations to being a black male student whose intellect and talents were neglected in the classroom (i.e., negative public regard). Ronald stated, "part of the reason why I want to teach is because I want to actually foster critical thinking and want kids to enjoy being in school rather than seen as just being there."

One of Ronald's first experiences consciously negotiating his racial self and another example of what Sellers et al. (1998) calls *racial saliency* occurred in high school:

I attended Evers high school which . . . was a cultural melting pot. We had people from India; we had people from Canada. It really broadened my view on what diversity really means because we really had to interact with people from different backgrounds, and that was something that I was not accustomed to. It took a lot of getting used to. But once I did . . . I learned a lot about our similarities and also our differences, which has helped me as a teacher because now I can appreciate those differences more and build upon them.

By interacting with peers and teachers from other ethnicities, Ronald became more conscious of his own racial identity. However, once Ronald's identity as a black male carried a different meaning and stigma. For example, he shared experiences of being racially profiled. Ronald reflected:

I've experienced racism . . . like whenever I go into a store I feel like somebody's following me or you know maybe they'll go over to the speaker phone or whatever and say, security check on aisle whatever I'm on. I've experienced that in high school too when I was out like with my white friends. . . . still today they don't get that I get it but they don't.

The stereotype, or stigma, associated with being a black male was no longer a threat, a childhood memory, or a familial story for Ronald—they were and remain his lived reality.

These two counter experiences (school and society) are examples of the socially constructed nature and process of developing one's racial identity (i.e., unchosen identity; Winkle-Wagner 2009) and also the process for which race became central to Ronald's everyday experiences (social and school context). In one context (high school and family racial experiences) Ronald was "free" to construct his own understanding of "self" and "others," while in another context (society) he was positioned by socially constructed identities. These racial experiences demonstrate how gender and race (race centrality) are essential to Ronald's definition of self (Sellers et al. 1998).

Ronald's identity links to schooling

Ronald's conceptions of CRP were rooted in his schooling and personal experiences growing up as a black male. Ronald's perception of a CR teacher was a person who advocated for: (1) implementing instruction that draws on the racial and linguistic talents of students; (2) having high expectations for all children; and (3) using critical thinking experiences to challenge students. He charged that "by helping them [racially diverse students] gain critical thinking or build on these skills can give them an equal chance in the world because the world is becoming and moving more towards using critical thinking skills." For Ronald, being an advocate of change referred to classroom instruction. As a CR teacher, Ronald is also charged with transforming practices and beliefs *beyond* the classroom, which coalesces with the Beauboeuf-LaFontant (1999) and Foster (1990) notion of CR and political teaching.

Notably, different data sources elicited different foci for Ronald as he grappled with issues relating to CRP. Ronald's reflections during the interviews and member-checking conversations were primarily situated within black–white relational experiences; whereas, his coursework assignments that promoted reflection on general issues of diversity in the classroom were based on his examination of the racial experiences of nonblack children, particularly Latino children. We attribute this to the different interview prompts and assignments. For example, the interview prompts *explicitly* situated CRP within participants' emerging racial *and* teacher selves, whereas the coursework prompts asked participants to examine CRP within the emerging teacher self as *implicitly* influenced by the developing racial self. Therefore, one key finding is the importance of the teacher education program in helping Ronald to reflect about teaching nonblack children.

At the time of the study, Ronald's field placement was located in an ethnically and linguistically diverse school similar to the ethnic population of his high school. Course assignments required Ronald to draw upon field experiences and professional beliefs to re-

spond to issues of diversity in the classroom. For example, one assignment from his assessment course required critical reflection on an article about culturally appropriate assessment. During this reflection, Ronald stated, “this article forced me to examine my own experiences with second language learners and my own biases towards them.” Furthermore, in his final interview when asked to reflect on how his courses and field experiences prepared him for understanding how to teach diverse children, Ronald said the assessment course prompted him to “think of better policies in assessing *all* students. I really did learn tools that I could use to assess all students.” He also mentioned the influence of the literacy course assignments in helping him to

look at teaching from a different standpoint. I really learned that literacy is really diverse. The literacy that kids bring to the classroom is important such as their home literacies, the way they speak to their parents or family, or to their friends.

He reflected on how the student diversity in his field placement helped him to see diversity even within the black community. Critical reflection assignments coupled with field placements in linguistically diverse settings made explicit for Ronald the salience of race for other minority, oppressed groups. He learned about CRP using the lens and racial experiences as a black male. However, as he experienced teaching linguistically diverse students, he began to inquire about the similar *and* different racial experiences of his students and how they impact his teaching and interactions with students. For his students whose native language was not English, Ronald developed consciousness of how language difference can be a tool of oppression and subtractive teaching. He likened this to his school experiences with low teacher expectations. When asked later in the study to reflect on why CRP is specifically important for students of color, his reflections consistently focused on the sociopolitical constructs and inequitable learning opportunities shared by racial minorities in the United States. He provided an example of the sociopolitical dimension of CRP:

If they don't feel like they're actually apart of the learning environment why should they care? I mean if you're just saying well Christopher Columbus founded America and that's it, and not actually exploring who was here first and actually he was wrong . . . if you don't actually explore these things with children they will always have these misconceptions or if you're talking about George Washington and not talking about Frederick Douglas, you're leaving out central things that could say you know what he was a black man, and if, if he can do it I can do it. If you're not talking about Chavez and then you're only talking about Martin Luther King how can your Hispanic students connect to the civil rights movement? That was a movement within itself.

Ronald began to develop an ideology that was both nationalist (emphasizing the unique black experience) and oppressed minority (exploring culture of his students). Arguably, the field *and* coursework experiences contributed to this racially transformative experience for Ronald.

In summary, Ronald's past schooling experiences and experiences in the teacher education program shaped his understanding of CRP. Ronald's reflections demonstrate awareness of his former teachers' negative expectations of him (race salient experiences), yet his awareness inspired him to connect to his own students' personal, social, and historic racial experiences (positive public regard). Furthermore, experiences learning about how best to teach English Language Learners prompted a racially transformative process as Ronald explored CRP. He believed that through responsive, affirmative, and caring instruction (e.g., CRP) a teacher can overcome educational inequities and negative perceptions.

Carla

Are all experiences racially equal? Because Ronald and Carla are both black, should we expect the same negotiated process of racial identity development? Our findings suggest several similarities between Ronald and Carla's experiences in choosing racial identities that are more affirming than that which society constructs. Simultaneously, the differences between their negotiated racial identities influenced their conceptions of CRP.

Carla's racial identity formation

Carla seemed to begin the program with an assimilationist ideology or passive regard for the place of race in teaching and learning about diverse children. She respected different races but did not address issues of oppression, prejudice, and stereotype. She had what Sellers et al. (1998) would refer to as a humanist ideology: one that deemphasizes the role of race in one's life experiences and outcomes, despite having shared racial experiences. During the first interview, Carla reflected on how she grew up in a biracial family and within a multiracial community. She stated:

I've had a lot of experiences with people with diverse backgrounds. . . . My extended family is from different races, and the town I grew up in was very diverse. There was black, white, Latino for the majority of people. My next-door neighbor was a different race. We practically lived with them, grew up with them. Race was never an issue.

According to Carla, she was raised to embrace the excellence and diversity of all and applied this belief in her travels internationally during her service in the Navy. One course assignment required Carla to reflect on what makes a good citizen. Her essay, titled "I Salute Me," shared her experiences and pride in joining the US Navy. In this same essay, Carla wrote:

A good citizen is actively involved in their community and the world around them. A good citizen in a democracy should recognize and have respect for all cultures. They should understand that everyone should have the same rights and be treated fairly. As a citizen, I make a conscious effort to recognize and respect all the cultures in the world. I feel that it is my duty to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities to be the very best citizen they can be.

Early in the study, Carla's expressed pride in being a learner of others' cultures.

Over time in the teacher education program, Carla began to grapple with racial identities that were reflective of "how society sees me" (Winkle-Wagner 2009) or the perceived negative public regard of what it means to be black (Sellers et al. 1998). Reflecting upon the teaching and learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students, Carla identified experiences in the teacher education program that conflicted with her humanist ideology. Carla said that the teacher education program fostered and encouraged deficit beliefs about children from diverse backgrounds. Thus, over the course of the program, she chose a racial identity that confronted biases and actively advocated against stereotyping blacks as she engaged in experiences that made race salient and ultimately *central* to her beliefs about CRP (Sellers et al. 1998; Winkle-Wagner 2009).

Carla's identity links to schooling

Carla demonstrated a pattern of resistance to experiences that were intended to encourage CRP in the teacher education program. Carla's early declaration that "For the most part I don't see color. I do see children" is the antithesis of CRP. By analyzing her racial and teacher identities as related developmental processes, we demonstrate why she resisted labeling herself as a CR teacher.

Taken at face value, many of her early reflections indicated a low centrality or value of African culture and the black racial experience. However, it is important to note when Carla began to reflect on the experiences in the teacher education program, it became evident that she was beginning to explore more of an oppressed minority position, even though during the first interview her reflection represented more humanist beliefs. We were intrigued by the ideological incongruence between the context of the teacher education program experiences versus familial and personal experiences. It wasn't until we analyzed Carla's process of racial identity experiences over time (as mediated by her experiences within the teacher education program) did we uncover how she actually came to the program (and study) with a sense of inner pride about her race (positive private regard) yet defaulting to a more humanistic perspective in practice due to her own racial identity experiences within the teacher education program.

Carla's positive perception of "self" and racial identity seemed to collide with her developing conceptions of CRP. For example, she explicitly reflected on the tensions and dissonance between her views about blacks and those expressed by her white cohort peers and instructors throughout the teacher education program. When asked during the first interview to describe her experiences with racism, Carla talked about the program itself. She considered her peers' reactions and comments in discussions about teaching "urban children" to be offensive, racist, and insulting. During this interview, she reflected:

About two weeks ago, we were talking about teaching in the urban school settings . . . and one of the girls was saying, "But if I don't feel safe there, if I don't want to live there, and I don't want to deal with those type of people then why would I want to teach there? Why would I want to work there? Why would I want to be around them?" And of course any time you mention urban, you're

not talking about a bunch of upper-class white people, you're talking about poor black people or minorities.

For Carla, urban meant black; therefore, she felt personally attacked whenever any negative references were made to urban children and families. An interesting caveat to this finding, however, is how her reaction to and rejection of "how society sees me" is similar to how some white candidates reject the tenets of their racial identity that embodies a legacy of oppression and privilege. Furthermore, Carla went on to question how her peers viewed her if they held such assumptions about teaching in urban settings. A few weeks later, when asked to reflect in a course on how creating a caring environment connected to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, Carla wrote:

I would try to get the students involved as much as possible. I would also set up an environment where mutual respect, cooperation, and freedom with order is expected from all of my students. *I would also stop assuming things about my students and start checking on things.* (emphasis added)

When asked to expand upon these comments during a member-checking session, Carla explained:

Every child will come with a different set of beliefs than the child sitting right next to them. We have to learn to embrace uniqueness rather than labeling them. Instead, accept who they are. I have seen a lot of labeling [in the teacher education program].

Race became salient for Carla within the teacher education program and was central to her emerging beliefs about CRP.

In her interviews and member-checking sessions, Carla expressed a distinctive dissonance and tension between her developing racial identity and concepts about CR teaching promoted by the program. For example, when asked during the first interview session whether she was being prepared to teach diverse students, Carla stated, "I'm not really being prepared. I'm just being told a bunch of facts and statistics. It's just facts and statistics." She explained how such statistics are really harmful in teacher education because

you are potentially dealing with a classroom full of white people who have zero experiences with black people, never seen black kids. Pretty much all the information you are putting out is that black people are dumb as rocks and are stupid. We can't read, we can't write, we're failures, we're going into these urban schools, you know it's just bad, bad, bad. Not all black people are stupid. Not all black kids are disadvantaged. All the black kids come who live in urban areas are not stupid. And that is what they are putting out, and I don't like it. They shouldn't, just like they're telling us don't single out anybody, no minorities, races, but it's always blacks, Latinos, and minorities. It's pretty much putting us down, like it's your job as a teacher to get them up to whatever the norm is, the

middle class, upper-class whites whatever, and I don't like that. So I don't need all the statistics because I'm one of those people.

Carla believed that her peers' deficit beliefs were reinforced and supported by the teacher education program because she believed that the program was using a white, middle-class comparative norm. Her racial identification as a black female initiated her personal offense to characterizations of black and minority children's academic abilities. A black teacher within a predominately white teacher education program, Carla began to express beliefs associated with oppressed minority ideology. She reflected upon how these racially oppressive experiences represented an institutional construct. Over time, as Carla engaged in coursework designed to dispel stereotypes and myths of minority students, her perceptions about the program's efforts to promote CRP seemed to shift. For example, when responding to an article about culturally appropriate assessment, Carla wrote:

After reading this article, I realize that there are people who are genuinely concerned and passionate about changes for second language learners. If changes are made regarding how second language learners are assessed, it could have a huge impact on the negative statistics that has burden the educational systems in the United States. I have hope that one day a system is in place that accommodates all children.

Carla critically considered how a teacher's action could impact educational policy and societal beliefs about diverse children. To her, a CR teacher was one who would take action in the classroom to affirm children's differences and draw upon a child's strengths. This conceptualization was the result of a negotiated outcome between her racial "self" and the CR teacher "self" encouraged by the teacher education program. This exemplifies how a CR teacher becomes professionally *and personally* invested in creating socially just educational spaces by experiencing such inequities themselves (Beauboeuf-LaFontant 1999; Brown 2014). At the conclusion of the study, we observed Carla beginning her journey toward ascribing politically meaningful practices to teaching.

Discussion

Examinations of candidates' racial awareness of self and others are key to developing culturally relevant teachers. This study centralizes black teachers' racial awareness and promotes a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a developing black teacher in the United States. Paris and Alim (2014) remind us:

(A)s scholars committed to educational justice, we live, research, and write with the understanding that our languages, literacies, histories, and cultural ways of being as people of color are not pathological. Beginning with this understanding—an understanding fought for across the centuries—allows us to see the fallacy of measuring ourselves and the young people in our communities solely

against the white middle-class norms of knowing and being that continue to dominate notions of educational achievement. (86)

Ronald and Carla's racial identities were foundational to their conceptions of CRP. Ronald defined a CR teacher as one who disrupts negative stereotypes, has high standards for diverse children, and provides them with rigorous and caring learning experiences. On the other hand, Carla's once-affirming racial identity was challenged by the teacher education program, and she felt discriminated against in course readings and by her cohort peers. Therefore, to Carla, a CR teacher champions against institutionalized societal views about blacks and promotes more affirming beliefs. While we knew that teacher candidates of color draw upon experiences as members of racial groups when introduced to issues of racism and equity (King 1991; Paris and Alim 2014), our findings suggest that candidates draw upon their racial identities even when *not* given explicit course opportunities.

Trajectories of racial identity development

Ronald and Carla, both black American teacher candidates, differed in their racial identity development, and their differences seemed to echo theories of racial identity development. For example, consistent with Winkle-Wagner's (2009) chosen and unchosen identities and MMRI, Ronald told about an unchosen stereotype in elementary school as a thug and his experiences with racial profiling. Ronald continuously reflected upon how his experiences represented the negative public regard for black males. Although he experienced negative public regard, Ronald's reflections about his race demonstrated his desire to affirm his own cultural heritage (i.e., positive private regard) and to learn about his students' racial experiences (private-public regard). Ronald developed an awareness of his own *and others'* experiences with oppression and stereotypes (i.e., oppressed minority ideology). As he confronted his biases, Ronald developed a more flexible worldview. We characterize his emerging worldview as a *multi-nationalist* perspective, in which he saw himself as a racial advocate for students of *all* backgrounds (Sellers et al. 1998). Alternately, as a black woman, Carla arrived at the teacher education program with an affirming racial private regard. However, as a result of what she perceived as negative public regard for minorities, Carla conceptualized CRP as one that disrupted such inequities she perceived to be occurring in the teacher education program.

The varying trajectories for racial development demonstrated across these case studies, can inform the field of teacher education, especially multicultural teacher education. Teacher educators can use critical reflection and linguistically diverse field placements to help black teacher candidates develop understandings of CRP. Most extant research on multicultural teacher preparation has investigated white teachers (Picower 2009; Sleeter 2008); however, teachers of color may require a different critical lens. This need for a different lens is perhaps most sharply revealed by Carla's "color blind" stance. For all practical purposes, Carla's stance was antithetical to conventional CRP. However, her stance was an authentic response to what she perceived to be deficit stereotyping and labeling within the teacher education program (i.e., "negative public regard"). Her reflections routinely argued for activism to disrupt the political and cultural barriers to equity; thus, the "color-blind" rhetoric can be interpreted in light of Carla's developing levels of racial identity

development. Critical reflection on racially focused experiences enabled Carla's trajectory toward CRP; however, this trajectory was different from white teachers (Picower 2009; Sleeter 2008). Ronald and Carla needed less time "acknowledging their race" and more time connecting racial awareness to their emerging understandings of CRP for both classroom instruction and educational institutions. What if teacher education programs were developed around Carlos and Ronalds? Would less time be spent examining racial privilege and more time on developing understanding and appreciation for the role and value of race and culture?

Findings from this study reiterate that candidates' racial backgrounds offer strengths and starting points for teacher education programs (Hollins and Guzman 2005). Teacher educators may benefit from awareness of differences in racial identity development because these trajectories are inextricable for development (Villegas and Davis 2008). Furthermore, our findings suggest that the teacher education program itself shaped Ronald's and Carla's identities.

Implications for CRP in teacher education

We suggest that teacher educators attend to systematically presenting opportunities for critical reflection (Durdén and Truscott 2013). In other words, teacher educators may require personal narratives about candidates' schooling, descriptions of school placements contextualized within the community's history, and analyses of social, historical, and political influences on teaching practices. Additional practical implications include:

- identifying candidates' progress in their own racial identity development;
- creating opportunities that complement racial identities; and
- providing opportunities to reflect on how racial identity influences their interactions with students.

Teacher education programs have the challenge of preparing a teacher workforce ready to successfully teach children with unique cultural and linguistic tools, talents, and experiences. Programs should purposefully and thoughtfully provide many opportunities for candidates to reflect and connect their racial identity experiences to their developing CRP. Future research can further explore how race affects CRP and investigate how processes differ for black teachers who are in predominately black teacher education programs. Teacher educators may also consider the cross-cultural interactions within a candidate's various identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status) to his/her development as a CR teacher. Future research can also explore how an instructor's racial identity affects candidates' developing understandings of CRP. When teacher educators learn from candidates' journeys toward CR teaching, we come closer toward providing equal access to quality educational for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Note

1. The participants in this study self-identified as “black,” thus, this study examines black racial identity development and labels participants as such. However, we acknowledge that in the United States, where this study took place, black is the racial identification of African Americans. The term “black” can also include people of African descent who have settled in other nations.

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