

RESPONDING TO “INNOCENT” RACISM: EDUCATING TEACHERS IN POLITICALLY REFLEXIVE AND DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This article develops the construct of “innocent racism” and argues for keeping questions of race central in teacher education. The authors report three cases in which they, teacher educators working within a school/university alliance, identified and addressed racism in their courses. We situate our analyses within antiracist research informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) where the teacher education students and ourselves struggled to recognize and address racism. Critical episodes are reflectively analyzed to challenge both teacher educators’ and teachers’ beliefs. We demonstrate how race still matters because of the ways in which it intersects with our practices. Examples of struggles that address emerging positions on race, language, and educational processes inform teacher and faculty learning with important local and global implications.

Keywords: Critical race theory; teacher education; university/school partnerships

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Context and Background

The preponderance of White teacher education candidates presents major challenges in preparing them to not only teach students from diverse backgrounds but also in engaging them with critical multiculturalism. Furthermore, there is a high probability that reform-minded programs will need to confront newer subtler forms of “White” racial superiority and privilege (Frankenberg, 1997; McLaren, 1997 b). Given little change in who becomes a teacher (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005), it is important to acknowledge that subtler forms of racism may have escaped the overt inoculation that teachers may receive in their professional development. We understand that the ability to act in ways that address oppression only develops out of prolonged engagement with these ideas. Thus in programs where multicultural education is limited to one course, teachers may at best acquire a discourse of anti-oppression but not a profound understanding of what to do to continuously intervene. Certainly this is revealed through their very nascent understandings of how oppression works through institutions. The concepts used to discuss racism are important to consider in preparing teachers for diverse student populations. We discuss a new concept, “innocent racism” that has an unyielding presence in education.

To define the concept of “innocent racism” and use this construct, this article reports on three different cases in which teacher educators within the Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA) alliance, a struggle to recognize and address racism within in-service teacher education. One goal was to forge partnerships between the University of Massachusetts Amherst, three local school districts, and several community organizations in Western Massachusetts. Our reflections include: 1) descriptions of three courses, some activities in the curriculum that illustrate how teacher educators’ ideological positions intersect with those of the teachers; and 2) our struggles with racism, linguisticism, and cultural diversity that emerged. Examples of critical episodes that challenged both teacher educators’ and teachers’ beliefs are analyzed through reflective inquiry. We demonstrate how race still matters because of the ways in which it intersects with our practices.

Theoretical framework

Un-learning racism is a conscious ideological choice. Therefore we situate our projects within the antiracist research informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and theorists who question the relationship between human agency and institutional practices (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995). CRT analysts point to the “importance of experiential knowledge and the use of narratives as a way in which to more accurately tell the stories of oppressed people of color” (Lynn, 2004, p.131). Rooted in legal studies, Delgado (1990) argued that a framework in which “people of color in our society speak from experience framed by racism” gives “voice” to creating a common structure to a social reality that is currently invisible (as cited in Tate, 1997, p. 211). We take up race and anti-racist teacher education with a stance that: (a) we are bound together in living in a racist society and, (b) using dialogic inquiry, we need to undo shackles that create asymmetrical race relations. We problematize institutional rules, regulations and norms that continue to exclude certain groups regardless of expressed intentions to do otherwise. Moreover, when these inequities are exposed, there can be no stronger ethical imperative than to transform them. We also take a critical position on our memberships within various social communities that are not immune to racism. Even “good” intentions can provide a space for reinscribing certain racist discourses (Marx, 2004). Hence, departing from the convergence tenet of

CRT, which holds that if convergence with the dominant interests prevails, the marginalized groups' interests are compromised and will not be addressed, we envision the teachers' agency to shape the values, knowledge, and skills of the institution.

As ethnographers of color and allied faculty, we also draw on an understanding that as agents of an institution, we are doubly bound to uphold, contest, and transform discourses to build on more equitable and socially just educational practices. As critical ethnographers, we center our interactions with teachers as the site of dialectical struggle to "write" race into professional development. Consequently, responding to overt racism and covert daily racism needs to be tailored to specific contexts and actors. We also seek to legitimize our subjectivities and claim agency in our reflexive critique as we answer these questions: *In what ways does race make a difference in teacher education students' professional development? When and why?*

Racism cannot be limited to one definition. One perspective holds that any particular experience can only be understood as racist when it is compared to another identical experience with differences in outcomes solely attributable to race. This means that it is necessary to both establish when racialization is occurring and to determine whether or not a differential effect in terms of power is involved (Carson, Dunbar, Chenhall & Bailie, 2007). Another perspective is to examine the processes of inferiorization (Murphy & Choi, 1997). This perspective addresses the constant reconfiguring of racism that sets up privilege through human actors' circulation of discourses and then traces the consequences. A third perspective sees racism primarily exercised through the dominant group's influence on others regardless of intentions (Gillborn, 1990). We align ourselves with an understanding of race as privileging one race over the other and interrogate its role in privileging members of one race over another in a system inherently hierarchical and institutionally shaped.

In an attempt to explain how members of dominant groups perpetuate racism, King (1991) coins the term "dysconscious" racism as "a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race. This view of racial inequity accepts certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages white people have as a result of subordinating others" (King, 1991, p. 128). This statement implies that those who have "dysconscious racism" have deficits in their thinking which need to be rectified indicating an assumption of a quick fix or an inoculation. However we argue that many teachers are indeed socialized to recognize the oppressive effects of discrimination. Rather than "dysconscious racism" we posit that there is a consciousness about race and racism however these concepts are often understood by many White teachers and teacher educators alike as irrelevant to teaching. So race and racism are both consciously made invisible. We coin the term "innocent racism" as it addresses a situation that we have often seen. This "innocence" allows educators to act as if race does not matter and racism does not exist, relieving them of having to take a role in responding to it. Acts of micro aggression are not viewed as institutional issues to monitor racism but rather are perceived as outcomes of an individual nature. However these acts reinforce similar practices that exclude certain racial groups, allowing their absence to be perceived as a result of their lack of qualifications and/or their lack of interest in teaching or the teacher education profession. Consequently the lack of recognition of race can lead to an "innocent racism" a racism that perpetuates privileged forms of communication, ways of being

and acting, and more importantly, identities, knowledge production and knowledge consumption. Our struggles to deal with this are found in the case studies presented here.

Connection to the Teacher Education Literature

Ladson Billings (1999) on educating teachers for multicultural society states, “Even at schools, colleges, and departments of education with well-regarded teacher preparation programs, students talk of “getting through the diversity requirement” (p. 240). Her comments illustrate the difficulty of having one mandated multicultural course ensure that students entering teaching have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to work in diverse schools and communities. Importantly, even if the teachers were inclined to implement what they have learned to transform their understandings, persistent inequities and deeply engrained language practices often challenge them.

Ahlquist (1991) identifies two extreme characteristics found in populations in mainstream teacher preparation in multiculturalism: small specialized groups of ideologically similar prospective teachers or more often than not, hostile and resistant prospective teachers. Having teachers construct knowledge about the technical aspects of teaching and content mastery of their disciplines are not sufficient to tackle the ideological load that often goes undetected in curriculum, teaching practices, innovation and assessment. Addressing this systematically requires that courses in teacher education programs involve teachers actively in theory construction as antiracist cultural workers and intellectuals in both their reflective practices and teaching apprenticeships. However, equity is an ongoing complex struggle that cannot be easily established by recipes (Goodwin, 1997). Efforts in teacher education need to view struggle as part and parcel of educating students for building a democratic and civil society (Giroux, 1997). We take an anti-racist stance that Thompson (2003) explains as, “...struggling against racism is an emergent, relational undertaking without a clear-cut, happily-ever-after ending” (p. 390). We offer potential examples of our struggles in a curriculum that addresses emerging positions on race, language, and educational processes in our teacher education project. As more of these types of local struggles are made public and analyzed, we can contribute further theories about the nature of these struggles locally and more globally.

Mode of inquiry

Our qualitative approach is primarily narrative and personal. Each of the cases draws on our lived experiences as teacher educators to identify critical moments in analyzing and addressing issues of race and racism. We collaborated in the ACCELA Alliance between 2003-2007, “to support the academic literacy development of linguistically and culturally diverse students attending public schools in the region by providing sustained, data-driven professional development to local teachers, administrators, community leaders, teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers” (Online: <http://www.umass.edu/accela/>). We worked with in-service teachers who were earning advanced professional licensure. Of the four cohorts of teachers who participated from 2003-2007 in each cohort, Latinos ranged between 4% - 30%, Whites 70-96%. Only 1 African-American teacher participated in each of 2 of the 4 cohorts. Also in these cohorts only one had three males and the others had only women.

We concentrate on “telling” moments that shifted our instruction and prompted reflection on race and racism as we interacted with teachers at different phases in this program. We reflected on our growing awareness of how racism manifested itself. Fatima, using her journal entries, teachers’ written reflections, and in-class written assignments reflects on how responding to overtly bigoted comments in her first course changed not only interactions and the content, but also outcomes for both teachers and herself. Next, Theresa and Yvonne identify how innocent racism through linguisticism emerged subtly through their interactions with teachers learning Spanish as a second language. Their reflections on teacher interviews and teacher written reflections indicate possibilities to reconfigure the course to address explicitly this racism. Lastly, Pat shares her self-questioning, and reflection on her instructional practice. Data collected through action research reveals instances of racism in her classes that were not publicly acknowledged by her or her students. She argues that a central focus on issues of race, power, and privilege in teacher education pedagogy is necessary to interrupt tendencies to ignore and continue to contribute to institutionalized oppression.

A Visiting Scholar Responds to Racism: New Challenges for Teacher Educators

In 2005, Fatima moved from Singapore to Massachusetts to teach in the Masters program within the ACCELA Alliance. The main objective of the course she was teaching was to provide teachers a forum for researching classroom practices that may affect English language learners’ opportunities to acquire academic literacy. She designed the course to critically engage teachers in issues of privilege and equity at both the micro-and macro-level. However, she noted as the course progressed several teachers made racist and discriminatory remarks. She continues the narrative in her voice:

We had been discussing Gutierrez, Larson, and Kreuter’s (1995) article “Cultural Tensions in the Classroom: The Value of the Subjugated Perspective” when one of the teachers, Maritza, blurted aloud,

If Blacks and Hispanic kids don’t do well in school, it’s their fault. They are just lazy because they all have brains. I tell this to my son all the time. He has to work hard to succeed and that’s that. There is no excuse for low marks. They are lazy.

No one challenged this comment and we continued discussing the article. This was not the only incidence of racism; several teachers’ in-class anecdotes and in-class responses to our readings included other blatant discriminatory remarks. I was not sure how to deal with these. I was scared and didn’t want to engage the teachers in these disturbing incidences of racism. Furthermore, I did not know my institutional rights and whether as a visiting scholar I would have any support for my responses. My ineffectual reactions to these situations caused me to reflect on my various social identities and how these intersected with certain teachers’ world-views. Initially as proof for addressing potentially negative course evaluations, I started documenting in a journal our classroom dialogues, reflecting on our discussions, my reactions to the teachers’ responses, and the content of the course.

I am a female, person of color, and was born in Tanganyika to Asian Muslim parents. I immigrated to Canada as an adolescent a few years after Tanganyika (Tanzania today) came under a socialist government. In reviewing my journal, I could see entries which exemplified the

fear of negative institutional repercussions. In the post 9/11 context media have represented the entire Muslim population as terrorists, ignoramuses, religious fanatics, and extremists. Similar to refugees who had been persecuted in their countries for their religious beliefs, I felt that my religion put me in a precarious and vulnerable position; I could be investigated, deported, and/or fired from my position for negative student evaluations in my classrooms. Remaining on good terms with the teachers was important to me as I was hoping to continue working in the United States.

However, the catalyst for my change in direction occurred when one of the teachers, in response to a newly arrived Somali refugee student enrolled in her class who wetted his pants on his first day at school, as “f...king savages.” No one challenged this statement. Although I was very disturbed by this comment I remained silent. The other teachers instead recounted their woes of increased workloads, being treated like babysitters, doing parents’ jobs, delays in their contract settlements, and the threats of punitive measures of if they disobeyed the scripted curriculum. I listened, took notes, and continued discussions of the written teacher reflections.

Thereafter, I engaged in discussion with two faculty of color to deepen my understanding of this new community, its stereotypes and most of all my social responsibility. How could I change my ineffectual responses to this critical situation grounded in my own history? I started reading texts to understand the political and historical forces that led to institutionalized racism in the United States. I came to some understanding of my teachers’ social identities; as having been formed through *socialization* by the discourses of national ideology. I realized that several teachers were not aware of how language implicated their subjectivities and their appropriation of racist stances. These particular teachers were conscious of the implications of their statements at an individual level but had little understanding of the institutional, national, and global implications of their remarks.

I invited the teachers to reflect on racism and its effects on theirs and their English language learners’ lives and how power, structural, and individual instances of racism could perpetuate the long-standing legacy of European imperialism. I used these understandings to center my teaching and research. I introduced the teachers to the concepts of critical literacy, critical discourse analysis and social constructs. Using dialogic pedagogy and inquiry, we learned about the creation and maintenance of institutional structures of domination and oppression through instructional practices. We revisited all our course readings to investigate discourses of white privilege, power, race, racism, discrimination, gender, and classism.

When I discovered King’s (1991) notion of “*disconscious racism*” I thought that this is what the teachers were displaying. Until one day, in response to my prompt, “Have you ever acted in a racist way?” I found that most of the teachers were aware of what they were saying but only at the personal level. One teacher wrote in her journal:

Speaking of racism in a way that I have discriminated against people. I know (emphasis in original text) I have both inadvertently and consciously acted that way. I was raised by 2 white parents who have tried not to be racist but still are at some points. I have been angry and said derogatory things out of anger, out of fear, sometimes I even say things or act certain ways without thinking about being discriminating. I certainly don't usually (emphasis in original

text) do those things on purpose but when your [sic] angry and frustrated sometimes its [sic] easy to discriminate. Its not something I am proud of but I do it, and I think a lot of people do. (Shirley, 03/08/06)

My readings of several of the teachers' written responses, class discussions, and my classroom and journal notes indicated that not only were they were confronting the information as "interested onlookers" (hooks, 1992) but also they were still not able to see how systemic forces or macro-level discourses composed their subjectivities and positionalities. Racism was so much part of their identity that they were blind to various institutions' role in perpetuating racism and discrimination.

I had several options including: 1) reporting my findings to the project director and, 2) ignoring those teachers who were resistant to developing antiracist world views and return to the original course plans. The question then became, *How does one foster this self-questioning of "innocent racism"?* I used their school ratings, inequitable distribution of educational resources, their curriculums, state education mandates, and the national agenda, to investigate spaces that were painful, uncomfortable, and controversial. I positioned the White teachers in situations where they could see how their identities were perceived and created by the state and nationally as being unknowledgeable, ineffectual, and not able to teach or think independently (in relation to the enforcement of the scripted curriculum). Using school ratings, local and national newspaper articles, and magazine articles, we further unpacked the concepts of race, institutional racism, and discrimination in relation to our identities and how similar prejudices and stereotypes filtered down to their students. We understood that the innocence was a convention that needed to be addressed because of insidious and far-reaching effects of institutional racism filtering down into the core of our existence. Together we reached some understanding of how subjectivities, positionalities, and discourse are intertwined to produce institutional racism and how our roles and attitudes are implicated in perpetuating racism.

Nested Context of Reforms and Persistent Racism through Linguicism

Yvonne and Theresa intended to prepare all teachers to experientially understand the process of learning an additional language through academic content via three program models, immersion, sheltered instruction, and dual immersion; learning about linguistically and ethnically diverse students; and learning about available community resources. Sixty-seven teachers participated over five years (2003-2007) in their Intensive Spanish for Teachers courses. The dominant English-speaking group would learn Spanish and the bilingual teachers would document their scaffolding process with their learners. All would submit their entries in portfolios, which would count as evidence of their learning. The teachers represented heterogeneous levels of proficiency in Spanish ranging from novice to advanced and included native Spanish speakers (NSS).

During this time frame, Yvonne and Theresa met regularly before and after classes to plan and reflect on the teachers' progress. After interviewing teachers and observing closely their interactions, we reflected on two significant issues: 1) the high emotional cost of learning through a second language, and 2) how issues of language and race produced ideologies through interactions between dominant and Latino Spanish-speaking teachers.

In their entries, White monolingual English speaking teachers for whom learning Spanish through content was a new experience, periodically felt at a loss, marginalized, and frustrated. Although they gratefully received support from their Spanish-speaking peers, we detected a subtle influence of racism emerging in the teachers' interactions with us, with each other, as well as in their references to students. In several entries, while empathizing with their own bilingual students' struggles and emotions in a class where the medium of instruction was not always understood, the notion of class management, absences, and disciplinary actions were identified as challenges for the learners but not given much more subsequent follow through on how this realization would affect their roles as teachers. "I can understand now why some of our students want to go to the bathroom so often when they encounter difficulty in a lesson" (MW). For example, rather than seeing these and other disruptions as potentially caused by the lack of communication with peers or with their teacher, often the student was solely blamed for comprehension problems. When teachers focused on class management as the issue rather than the instruction that hides the linguisticism, the underlying causes of disruptions to learning were not visible. Typically learners who fail to comply with assignments in English are viewed as the culprits; the teacher becomes the enforcer of English only and the medium of instruction is invisible as having shaped this difficulty. Teachers who did not use Spanish with their students or did not try to understand the impact of English in silencing them viewed the disruption as solely the students' fault. Additionally, we reflected on how the over emphasis on class management rather than on understanding the causes of emotional responses to this learning context renders invisible non-responsive instruction and pushes limited-English proficient students, primarily Puerto Rican, out of the school system. Teachers do not see themselves as responsible for this institutional effect; they are innocently managing students.

We discovered how conflicting emotions toward the process of language learning became mobilized in racial terms. The English dominant teachers' perspective on their bilingual peers, mostly Puerto Rican, shifted the latter's status and value as necessary for the former's survival in the Spanish immersion experience class. Furthermore most White teachers realized the connection to their own students' second language development and recognized the value of bilingual teachers. As a consequence, the White teachers started crossing racial and ethnolinguistic boundaries by building cross-racial and ethnic connections to the communities, particularly those who started investing in their Spanish learning. Many White teachers also felt that immersion techniques used in the first part of the course made them aware of the large burden Puerto Rican second language learners of English carried in the aftermath of Question 2 to learn both English and content matter with little support in Spanish.

In discussing how our course could better serve Puerto Rican teachers, we read and reflected on their entries. As we examined the entries, we were not aware of another salient racial issue. The English dominant teachers had started to make unreasonable demands for translation and interpretation. Bilingualism was seen as a property that could be demanded as if it were an expected service, a sort of tax on those who were bilinguals. In fact, districts started firing bilingual teachers who had accented English and who were considered not proficient in English. In our course when the English dominant teachers excessively complained about their struggles to use Spanish, several native speakers of Spanish and advanced learners felt unduly pressed into service to do their work. Consequently, the bilinguals began to feel less inclined to display their bilingual identities and linguistic abilities in Spanish. The effect was humbling for us as instructors. We had wanted to create a setting where bilingualism was seen as a resource for all

to cultivate. However because we positioned the native speakers of Spanish and advanced learners as the mediators without clearly establishing the responsibilities of the beginning learners, all of whom were White, several mediators became over taxed and exploited by some of the White teachers. The dynamics of who is seen as knower became a cultural capital that was exploited and not negotiated. Several White teachers became more demanding of their Spanish speaking peers. In these interactions, impositions were being placed on the Spanish speakers to translate documents. This was parallel to what was happening in the school district. School administrators had obligated bilingual paraprofessionals and teachers to intervene in communicating with Spanish-speaking parents, often pulling them out of classes to do so. Thus in our course we saw a growing need arise to dedicate more time for bilingual teachers to discuss issues affecting them at their schools. In a sense, the invisibility of their increased responsibilities was taking an extra toll. The valued resources were now their responsibility to access and use and not a shared responsibility with their English dominant peers and their administrators, who were primarily White.

As interactions provided more mutual benefits, several cross-racial and ethnolinguistic collaborations were formed in each cohort. A Puerto Rican teacher expressed a widely shared sentiment: *Estoy seguro que estos maestros ya no serán los mismos después de esta clase y estarán más conscientes de lo difícil que es para nuestros estudiantes aprender un segundo idioma* [I am sure that these teachers now will never be the same after this class and will be more conscious of how difficult it is for our students to learn a second language] (HS, Reflections, Summer 2003). Another reported: *En esta clase rompimos las barreras al necesitarnos el uno al otro y estar todos en un mismo bote y nos compenetramos como un solo grupo* [in this class we broke down barriers by needing one another and by being in the same boat and we integrated to form a single group] (MS, Reflection, Summer 2003). This change in participation also made racism through linguisticism no longer overtly manifested. The shared knowledge of the second language experience and the formal understanding of the development process was manifested in subsequent ACCELA courses. While we cannot claim that linguisticism was eradicated, we recognize that teachers finished courses with insights on linguisticism that were gained through experiential and cognitive struggles. These also served to help them build their identities as experts in their districts.

Reflecting Backward to Transform the Present

Wondering about teacher education and the role race plays in everyday practices, Pat draws on CRT and Critical Literacy as she examines her own power and cultural practices as a White teacher educator. She reflects on the effects of that power as she aligns herself with an agenda to end all forms of marginalization, in particular by race. Her self-questioning makes visible institutional practices that potentially perpetuate racism.

I am a White middle-class professor. In my courses, I draw on a Participatory Action Research/Critical Literacy framework that demands my ongoing reflexivity about participant relationships (Paugh & Robinson, 2009), especially in examination of complex relationships that are challenging to “critical praxis.” A pressing question emerged when as a practicing elementary school teacher, I continually witnessed students who did not fit normative definitions of school success “othered” and removed from mainstream classrooms or placed within “low ability” groups with oversimplified curriculum. Race and identity play a role in such practices.

Now as a professor, I examine my lived experiences as an ally to those who are marginalized by race and question institutional practices that uphold racial inequities passed off as “natural.” Committed to the learning opportunities to be gained through CRT, I began the exploration described below.

After reviewing literature on CRT (Tate, 1997; van Dijk, 1992; Duesterberg, 1999; Lynn, 2004) and reflecting on the role of critical literacy conceptions of “reading the word and the world” (Freire, 1993/1970), I remembered an exercise developed by Foss (2002) who created an “intersection of identity” chart which enabled her students to see themselves as multiple “selves” rather than as essentialized members of a race or culture. Creating my own chart provided a rough estimation of identities that influence my narratives. For example, my race, educational background, gender, family, and religious upbringing influence my language and actions as I negotiate my position as a faculty member.

Next, I located events from my participation where I was challenged by racial and linguistic diversity. These contexts included two overlapping communities: the research community of graduate students and faculty and the practitioner community that included public school teachers in the district-based master’s program. I identified certain events across these as “critical moments.” I listed language related to racial and linguistic diversity from these events. Some examples from my list include:

- “You may be too white to be effective here.” (comment to me from a White colleague)
- “My race positions me incorrectly as a model minority.” (comment made by an Asian doctoral student during a course)
- “What does that show – that White teachers are White?” (comment by a doctoral student of color after a scholarly presentation by an invited speaker of color)
- “The international student was silenced in that group.” (comment by a colleague of color about tensions in a master’s course)

Why did this racial language in these statements make an impact on me? I realized that my identities as a White, doctoral faculty member, and a scholar theoretically focused on “teachers as researchers” positioned me in ways that were both powerful and vulnerable. To understand what these meant and to address tensions, I wrote narratives. Composing these narratives was an opportunity to reflect on my own identities in relation to identities of other participants. I used critical discourse analysis, guided by questions from van Dijk (1992, pp. 92 – 93) that included:

- What was the local context?
- How did identities of race, class, education, language, and gender participate in construction of this context and within the context?
- What contextual structures and strategies were reproduced and which were challenged by the interactions during this event?
- What learning did I take away as a teacher educator and researcher from this event and from analyzing this narrative?

One narrative entitled –Narrative Reflection: Questioning Racism Towards a Latina Teacher” is shared below.

This narrative speaks to my ongoing challenges meeting my goals of socially just pedagogy. It emerged as a result of specific events in a course. During one class, a cohort of teachers prepared practitioner research to present publicly to district administrators. The participants included 25 teachers (White monolingual, Latina bilingual, White bilingual), 2 instructors (Colombian doctoral instructor, White monolingual professor), and 8 doctoral project assistants (Colombian, Haitian, European-American, Korean-American, Filipino-American).

During our workshops where teachers revised Powerpoint presentations, two teachers in this group, one White teacher and one Latina teacher had been particularly involved emailing, seeking feedback from instructors and project assistants, and developing innovations during this revision cycle. The two were invited to present their revisions during a subsequent workshop. During the presentations, I noted that the White teacher was attended to completely by all teachers. In contrast, during the Latina teacher’s presentation, side conversations developed and fewer teachers paid attention. From the instructors’ perspectives, both presenters had strong voices, good ideas, and a lot to contribute. I questioned myself whether racism was implicated, especially when a White teacher approached me afterwards and asked me to “speak to” the Latina teacher about her direct critique of the district’s science program, despite clear evidence to support the critique.

My next thought was whether this episode should be pursued and if so, how? What tools should I use as a White teacher educator to pursue gut feelings about discrimination? This “critical moment” led me to review videotapes of other class discussions. I noticed another class member, Laura, a Latina administrator, often had her hand in the air. When recognized, she effectively mediated issues of racism. She would not assert herself directly but was always ready to productively challenge her colleagues, both White and Latina. She named race and language discrimination directly, and in one case disrupted a classmate, Aralisa’s deficit language in ways that led Aralisa to take decisive new action as a teacher researcher. This called me to reconsider my role and power as an instructor. Although I have power to control the discourse, I don’t always use that power effectively. More often, as a White middle-class woman, the “habitus” developed in classroom settings (Bourdieu, 1977), and in most of my social interactions, privilege me to control the discourse. In doing so, I was prevented from recognizing and tapping expertise in the group to name and confront discrimination. Increased ability to identify and create allies within my classes calls me to greater praxis in developing more strategic distribution of leadership. Teacher educators from dominant groups can often be jolted by incidents with racial overtones. Yet rather than examine the jarring feeling, we opt for silence. In my case, my own cultural inclination to “direct” made it easier to ignore the resources in front of me. Without remaining vigilant and interrogating these

dynamics, it is all too easy to collude with existing and invisible assumptions that recreate inequity within our educational programs.

Conclusions

As we develop critical race conscientization in our practice, teachers too cannot help but be influenced through their preparation. The potential to dismantle the injurious effects that institutionalized racism helps protect and disguise as individual deficiencies characterized by the flaws in the “Other” is realized by persistent application of critical race awareness to audits of the teacher education program’s curriculum, community outreach research, research on mentoring teacher collaboration with racially impacted schools, and education of future researchers in teacher education. Our narratives demonstrate how “innocent” racism is not initially easily recognized as such. With evidence from teacher educators and teacher reflections and projects, we document how new understandings are produced about privilege and its differential consequences that give rise to this “innocence.” More importantly we struggle for a more hopeful agenda to addressing the dynamic nature of racial privilege. It is our contention that this struggle is vital to any teacher education program with the mission of preparing teachers to succeed with the diverse populations of the U.S. and our expanding interconnectedness with the world’s ecology of diversity. We, in the US, can be potential leaders here and for those countries that have historically limited the rights of Others by overt statutes against language and or ethnically diverse populations such as the Roma in Europe, Tutsies in Zaire, Chinese and Koreans in Japan, or the Uighurs in China. Our narratives and their discussion will serve as honest, pragmatic ways guided by theory to deal with race and racism in preparing teachers for diverse student populations.

Contribution to Teacher Education

An examination of interactions within our local contexts and our critical reflection, reveal that we are implicated in hegemonic practices when we remain silent in the face of racialized interactions. Fatima’s response to her initial silence in the classroom provided her with the impetus to reflect on her identity as a Muslim woman within the context of US racism. She faced difficult options in risking a loss of employment if she had not proceeded with curriculum, and risking uncertainty by addressing issues on race. She decided to interact with the teachers to get them to focus on their socially constructed identities, socialization of young language minority children, and challenged teachers’ thought about White hegemony. Theresa’s and Yvonne’s narrative attends to how racialized language inequities exacerbate the extra burdens of bilingual teachers that were produced in a context of English-only policies. Linguicism against the use of Spanish allowed several of the White teachers to distance themselves from its use leaving the communicative burden on Latina teachers. Several of the White teachers claimed White privilege by withholding their labor to negotiate understanding Spanish. Theresa and Yvonne shifted course assignments so that responsibilities to use Spanish became more equitable in labor and benefits. They addressed racial consequences that emerged through the differential use of Spanish. Pat’s conscious articulation of several instructional practices provided us with an opportunity to reflect on how her own identity intersected with the identities of teachers in her program. Her awareness about the intersections of racism, power, and identity that emerged using critical review of her practice argues for the need for questions of race and language to remain central to teacher education. In Pat’s case such a lens opened space for her recognition

and inclusion of previously untapped funds of knowledge available to teacher educators as they learn along with their students about equity and social justice in education practices.

In each narrative, issues of race were addressed within curricular responses to our interpretations of emergent racism. We never anticipated facing racism in our courses thus, none of our actions were pre-determined. In our roles as critical multicultural educators and advocates of social justice, our values and beliefs provided the impetus to reflect, learn, and undertake the issues that were unfolding as injustices attributed to racism.

As we reflect on our practices within and outside this context, we understand more clearly that no single response to racism can be prepared or distributed in a cookie-cutter lesson. Each context has particularities and teacher educators' responses will be based on their repertoires of tools to address racism, discursive, material, and cognitive. However, breaking the silence of innocent racism can open up possibilities to respond to racism in all its changing forms. Like Horton & Freire's (1991) emergent and contextualized social change, we build antiracist practices to address innocent racism through this public examination. We suggest that because of the unpredictability of the contexts of racism in teacher education that educators must believe that race is endemic and that it is important to look for where inequities show up, to be aware of consequential subtleties, and to act to address these.

Our theoretical contributions combine the critical examination of individuals and social realms of teacher education with how they both contribute to the local economies of production and consumption of ideological practices in schools and communities. By using CRT to guide our activity, we continue in the struggle to meet the ever-changing face and discourse of racist practices in schools that impede the progress of diverse learners. We strive to build from these tentative efforts to privilege fairness and inclusion of diverse populations' contribution and participation in the benefits of U.S. society.

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