Despite the dramatic shift in demographics occurring within public schools, there is still a dismal amount of research connecting issues of diversity and race with the curricula guiding educational leadership preparation programs. In the field of leadership preparation, little information has been offered as to how professors facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their classrooms, particularly conversations focused specifically on race-related issues. In this article, we consider concepts we believe should be included in leadership preparation programs seeking to develop leaders for diverse settings. We conclude the article by discussing suggestions that could help contribute to the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

Over the course of the past several years, the United States federal government has become more assertive in its policy efforts to “turn around” the nation’s persistently lowest performing public schools. As a result, the importance of preparing socially-just leaders has become even more paramount, as the great majority of schools labeled as low-performing are located in metropolitan areas where poverty is concentrated and students of color are the primary population (Noguera & Wells, 2011). Principals in such settings must confront a number of unique challenges when working with a student population where the majority of students are considered to be at-risk for school failure (Aud et al., 2011), and thus the principals must have the capacity to engage in, and facilitate, social justice oriented conversations with students, parents, and community stakeholders. Consequently, leadership preparation programs have a responsibility to more purposefully address issues of diversity and social justice, ensuring these issues are woven throughout the written curricula upon which these programs are founded.

In a recent survey conducted by Hawley & James (2010), 62 institutions affiliated with the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) were asked to describe how their courses, resources, and strategies prepare leaders to address the needs of diverse learners. While the survey yielded a 30% response rate, thus failing to represent all leadership programs, the responses should cause alarm for all colleges of education. Among the findings, the majority of the universities reported that issues of diversity were only taught in one course throughout the duration of their leadership preparation programs. Additionally, those courses targeting issues of diversity focused primarily on macro-political themes, such as the historical, sociological, and political context of discrimination.
and inequities in education faced by students of color. While such topics are certainly important to include in the preparation of educational leaders, Hawley & James (2010) found programs frequently failed to address a number of the micro-political diversity issues school leaders face on a daily basis. Thus, the offering of a curriculum failing to address how leaders should navigate “day-to-day” issues pertaining to diversity leaves future leaders without the strategies necessary to lead within the current context of diverse schools (Hawley & James, 2010).

Unfortunately, for those in the educational leadership field, the findings from Hawley & James’ (2010) research are not surprising. While educational leadership preparation programs have evolved to better address issues of social justice (Blackmore, 2009; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008), the educational leadership literature is still insufficient when it comes to providing actions and concrete strategies such programs can implement into their curricula.

In this article, we discuss several theoretical concepts we believe should be included in the curriculum of leadership preparation programs seeking to develop leaders for diverse settings. While the terms diversity and social justice encapsulate a number of different meanings, for the purposes of this article we chose to focus specifically on issues pertaining to race and racism. The choice to focus on race specifically was brought about by the results of our textual examination of the most frequently read journals by educational leadership professors, as we illustrate how the leadership preparation field overwhelmingly neglects research that ties together issues of race with educational leadership and leadership preparation.

The preparation of today’s school leaders must include a more purposeful focus on building the conversational skills necessary to facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their schools, particularly conversations about the variety of complex issues pertaining to race and racism. We believe education leaders must be provided with a rigorous and critically oriented curriculum, one that offers multiple opportunities to participate in the reflective examination of the ideologies/concepts that often limit and/or block discussions focused on race from occurring. We conclude the article by offering several normative suggestions for the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

**Theoretical Considerations**

Today’s school leaders face a myriad of complex issues. How these leaders are prepared (or not) to address the critical issues facing diverse student populations today is cause for concern. Research has shown that while school leaders are called upon to change many of the inequities institutionalized within schools’ culture (Dantley & Tillman, 2009), traditional leadership preparation programs only skim the surface when ad-
dressing issues of social justice (Marshall, 2004). This is not to say that scholars within the field of educational leadership have not been challenging preparation programs to incorporate social justice issues within their curricula (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Dantley, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hawley & James, 2010; Jean-Marie, 2010; López, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Tillman, 2004). However, after examining the educational leadership literature for actual strategies incorporated into preparation programs to assist future leaders in the areas of diversity and social justice, we discovered a dismal amount of research connecting pedagogical strategies intended to address issues surrounding race with educational leadership and leadership preparation. McKenzie et al. (2008) articulated this point, suggesting that the field is still stuck in the “calling for action” stage rather than actually acting upon such requests.

Thus, we turned our focus to the teacher preparation literature, as a number of scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007; Milner, 2010; Pollock, 2004, 2010; Schultz, 2003) have been examining these issues for quite some time. We particularly found Milner’s (2010) conceptual detailing of the “repertoires of diversity”—elements that should be embedded within any curriculum guiding a teacher preparatory program—intriguing. We felt as if the conceptual and pragmatic ideas presented by Milner (2010) were exactly what had been missing from the field of educational leadership. With this in mind, we began our own effort to develop a list of critical concepts we believe must be woven into the curricula and pedagogical practices of programs seeking to prepare educational leaders for diverse settings. After an extensive review of the literature we concluded that leadership preparatory programs must carefully examine five key issues/concepts pertaining to: (a) color-blind ideology, (b) misconceptions of human difference, (c) merit-based achievement, (d) critical self-reflection, and (e) the interrogation of race-related silences in the classroom. Just as Milner (2010) warns when outlining his repertoires of diversity, the five issues/concepts highlighted in this article do not represent an all-inclusive listing of the issues pertaining to the preparation of educational leaders for diverse school communities. Rather, the five topics were decided upon after the reflexive examination of findings and feedback revealed during our previous research efforts, and by an extensive reading of the literature focused on both the preparation of educational leaders for social justice/equity and the exploration of race-related silences in the classroom. Additionally, unlike Milner’s five conceptual repertoires of diversity, two of the five issues we examined—critical self-reflection and the interrogation of silenced voices—are practice-oriented concepts that if acted upon, can help preparation programs develop transformative curricula and pedagogical experiences for educational leaders.
Methods & Data Sources

Because the purpose of this article is to examine the critical concepts we believe contribute to the silencing of race-related conversations, and thus prevent educational leadership programs from preparing the social justice-oriented leaders required for today’s public schools, it was necessary to examine how the field of leadership preparation has examined the possible contributors to race-related silences within the classroom. Through an extensive review of what Mayo, Zirkel, & Finger (2006) identified as the top five journals most frequently read by educational leadership professors: Educational Leadership, Phi Delta Kappan, American Educational Research Journal, Educational Administration Quarterly, and Educational Researcher (see Table 1), we attempted to locate articles that addressed the five critical concepts as they relate to the preparation of education leaders.

Table 1

Most Frequently Read Journals by Educational Leadership Professors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical within field:</th>
<th>Frequency (and percentage) of respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td>125 (52%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phi Delta Kappan</td>
<td>124 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Educational Research Journal</td>
<td>119 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Administration Quarterly</td>
<td>119 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Researcher</td>
<td>88 (37%)</td>
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Note: Table 1 presents the “distribution of responses concerning the actual usage (i.e., regular reading) of the same specialized periodicals plus periodicals outside education, labeled as ‘in field’ and ‘outside field,’ respectively” (Mayo, Zirkel, & Finger, 2006). The results of this survey are based upon feedback received from a random sample of 800 professors located within UCEA member institutions.

In our efforts to examine the five most frequently read publications by educational leadership professors (see Table 1), we conducted the following searches, at times varying the ways in which Boolean operators were employed, based on the constructs of individual databases:

a) education leadership AND race;
b) education leadership AND race AND color-blind;
c) education leadership AND race AND difference;
d) education leadership AND race AND meritocracy;
e) education leadership AND critical reflection AND silences;
f) leadership preparation AND race;
g) leadership preparation AND race AND color-blind;
h) leadership preparation AND race AND difference;
We chose to narrow our search to a specific time frame, 2006 through 2011, as this designation of time is congruent with our own entrance into, and graduation from, an educational leadership Ph.D. program, as well as our continued investigation of issues pertaining to race and the preparation of educational leaders.

**Initiating a More Purposeful Focus on Racially Oriented Social Justice Conversations**

While educational researchers have been calling for preparation programs to ensure that school leaders have the capacity to address issues of social justice for over a decade (Brown, 2004; Bush & Moloi, 2008; Lomotey, 1995; Lumby, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Rusch & Horsford, 2009; Scheurich & Laible, 1995), and while the recent movement within educational leadership programs to address issues of social justice (Blackmore, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007, 2009, 2010) may provide educational leaders with a number of the skills necessary to achieve success in schools labeled as at-risk for failure, the field of leadership preparation has provided little information as to how professors facilitate racially-oriented social justice conversations within their classrooms. The stunning lack of racially-oriented social justice literature in the field of educational leadership was brought to light in our examination of the most frequently read journals by educational leadership professors (see Table 2).

As noted in Table 2, while Educational Administration Quarterly and Educational Researcher certainly lead their contemporaries, each of the five most read journals in the field of education leadership have failed to adequately address racially-oriented social justice themes over the course of the past five years. This is simply unacceptable when considering the federal government’s current efforts to dramatically improve the learning communities at historically low-performing schools, the great majority of which are populated by students of color (Noguera & Wells, 2011).

Consequently, based upon what we were able to find among the literature available in the field of educational leadership, we bring forward five theoretical concepts we believe deserve more attention within the field of education, both in research/publication venues and within leadership preparation program curricula. As we illustrate below, the preparation of today’s school leaders must include a purposeful focus on building the critical dialogical skills necessary to facilitate anti-racist conversations, which includes carefully examining issues/concepts pertaining to color-blind ideology, misconceptions of human difference, merit-based achievement, critical self-reflection, and the interrogation of race-related silences in the classroom.
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Refuting Color-Blind Ideologies

Contemporary society has shown that engaging in conversations about race and racism is typically difficult and often met with great apprehension. Indeed, many people would rather not talk about issues of race and racism, refuse to acknowledge that racism is salient and racial differences exist, and believe that the color of one’s skin has nothing to do with the opportunities available in society.

Following the civil rights era, the myth perpetuated among many Whites included the notion that race was no longer a contributing factor in determining life chances. This myth only became reified through the media and political pundits with the election of President Barack Obama (Alemán, Salazar, Rorrer, & Parker, 2011; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Although racial oppression still exists throughout the fabric of our society, albeit in much a different, covert form, it manifests itself through a new form of racism, which Bonilla-Silva (2010) has labeled “colorblind racism.” Colorblind racism essentially allows Whites to “blind” themselves when attempting to make meaning about race, interpreting racial phenomena through dominant frames that allow them to: (a) appear “reasonable” or “moral” while opposing policies that work to alleviate racial inequality (abstract liberalism); (b) use culturally-based arguments to blame minorities for their place in society (cultural racism); (c) claim that racial phenomena are natural occurrences in society (naturalization); and (d) argue that racism and discrimination are a “thing of the past” and no longer play a contributing role in minorities’ life chances (minimization of racism) (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

The frames of colorblind racism help to maintain the racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) and provide an appearance of formal equality among individuals without paying much attention to the inequities and inequalities existent within our daily lives (Guinier & Torres, 2002). However, the acceptance of the colorblind frames and a broader colorblind agenda can have serious societal ramifications, particularly in the field of education, as they can inhibit the purposeful confrontation of critical issues concerning race and racism (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Indeed, in the 2007 Supreme Court case that struck down two school districts’ ability to use race to achieve diversity through their student assignment plans (Parents Involved in Community Schools vs. Seattle School District No. 1), Chief Justice Roberts epitomized the essence of colorblind ideology in his opinion, stating that “the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race” (p. 2768). Although colorblind policies such as those handed down by the Supreme Court claim to negate race as a consideration, in reality, colorblind structures enable racism, facilitating its persistence in more subtle ways (Bergerson, 2003). In a society that operates from a highly racialized framework, categorizing groups of people by their race to explain differences such as education, health, eco-
nomics, and employment, operating from a colorblind ideology is simply unrealistic (Pollock, 2004).

Educational research has shown that operating from a colorblind ideology can assist in misrepresenting the realities of race and racism and promote acts of prejudice and discrimination toward persons of color (Schofield, 2010). Further, using a colorblind discourse in educational settings not only allows whiteness to remain invisible as the measure of comparison to other racial groups, it also disavows the importance of the histories and cultures of underrepresented groups (Applebaum, 2006). Moreover, as our schools continue to operate from a Eurocentric, middle-class framework, colorblindness requires students of color to act upon the ideals of whiteness while simultaneously allowing Whites to maintain their privilege (Bergerson, 2003; Guinier & Torres, 2002).

Educational leaders, and the programs that prepare them, must be familiar with and refute the theoretical constructs of colorblind ideologies that infiltrate the educational system. Further, preparation programs should provide educational leaders with a pragmatic guide on how to confront issues informed by colorblind ideology.

**Counteracting the Misconceptions of Human Difference**

Confronting stereotypes and the misconceptions of human difference is another concept of diversity educators should integrate into leadership preparation program curricula. The false notions constructed by scientists for many centuries that Whites are more intellectually competent than non-Whites continue to pervade the education system (Pollock, 2008). The myth of intellectual capability is ever present in contemporary society, from suggesting that IQ is genetic and a correlation between race and intelligence exists (Hernstein & Murray, 1996), to blaming the family structure and background of students, predominately low students of color on their inability to succeed in school (deficit thinking) (Valencia, 1997), to asserting that children who grow up in a culture of poverty do not succeed in life because they have been taught the “hidden rules of poverty” as opposed to the hidden rules of being middle class (Payne, 2005).

In reality, the differences that exist among the socially constructed categories of people we label as “races,” from education to wealth to health, have nothing to do with biology but rather with history and our social lives (Goodman, 2008; Haney Lopez, 1994; Pollock, 2008). Indeed when the social construction of race was first employed, a racialized social structure was created to provide Europeans (Whites) with systemic privileges over non-Europeans (non-Whites). Today, the reproduction of White privilege and racial structures continues to exist. Consequently, those in power are able to maintain their privilege and benefit from a position of dominance. Britzman (1998) claims that if “anti-racist pedagogy is to be more than a consolation, it must make itself inconsolable by engaging with what it excludes, namely
the complex and contradictory debates within communities over how communities are imagined and made subject to their own persistent questions” (p. 111). This challenge to anti-racist pedagogy must be acknowledged in the preparation of educational leaders. As leaders grapple with the differences in community, their own and others, it is important that they “incite identifications and enlarge the geography of memory” so they are better able to create environments that seek to address the exclusivities created through what Freud (1962) called the “narcissisms of minor difference.”

**Recognizing Student Achievement is not Always Based on Merit**

The idea that achievement is based solely upon the merit of individuals, also referred to as meritocracy, is another concept we believe should be interrogated within the curriculum of educational leadership preparation programs. Education-based meritocracy examines the relationship between the origin of individuals’ socioeconomic status, their educational attainment levels, and their socioeconomic status in society and claims that as individuals attain ideal education-based meritocracy, social mobility gradually increases (Goldthorpe, 2003). However, what is not taken into consideration in this theory is the realization that not every individual is afforded the same economic, educational, and social opportunities (Milner, 2010). Additionally, meritocracy ignores the ways in which discriminatory practices continue to shape institutions within our society. Yet, in the field of education, many still believe that success is based on merit, and thus consider the inability of those striving to succeed to be a direct consequence of the choices they make and the lack of effort they put forward.

School leaders oftentimes fail to recognize how race has been institutionalized within the education system, allowing the dominant race (Whites) to maintain their privileges in society. Riehl (2000) found administrators to be “steeped in a structural-functionalist perspective that tends to view the existing social order as legitimate, that espouses the values of democracy and meritocracy, and that adopts a managerial orientation instead of a socially transformative one” (p. 58). Further, Maher and Tetreault (1998) illustrate the inability of educational leaders to understand the impact of White privilege and whiteness within the classroom, particularly how it can limit discourse, to be a powerful framework for reifying the superiority of the dominant race (White). Further, even when administrators personally recognize the existence of race-related issues within their schools, they publicly avoid them, failing to create inclusive settings for diverse students (Riehl, 2000).

Educational opportunities for children across different racial and socioeconomic groups continue to be unequal. Schools serving low-income students and students of color receive fewer resources, have a more difficult time attracting highly qualified teachers, and face more challenges in addressing students’ needs (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Thus, no matter
how hard a student works toward achieving his/her goals, the systemic barriers existent within the educational system actually work to perpetuate inequalities within schools. Indeed, it would be both false and detrimental on the part of school leaders to subscribe to a discourse promoting merit-based achievement as it fails to recognize the many complexities undergirding the ability for students to succeed in school and beyond.

Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection

The field of adult learning has long addressed the importance of critical self-reflection in the education of democratic citizens (see Brookfield, 1991, 1995; Mezirow, 1985, 1990; Taylor, 1993, 1998). Mezirow (2003) suggests the mere possibility of critically oriented discourse is dependent upon two learning capabilities specific to adults: critical self-reflection (Kegan, 2000) and reflective judgment (King & Kitchner, 1994). It is the nurturing of each of these cognitive exercises that leads to “transformative” learning experiences, learning that allows for the development of adult educators and activists able to foster the “social, economic, and political conditions required for fuller, freer participation in critical reflection and discourse by all adults in a democratic society” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 63).

The valued role of critical self-reflection in the development of socially conscious educators and activists has also been an important topic within the field of educational leadership. Dantley (2008), in a speech challenging the traditional paradigms that have historically structured leadership preparation programs, suggested that principled leadership cannot exist without the presence of its most essential ingredient, critical self-reflection. For Dantley, critical self-reflection is viewed as a specific type of cognitive exercise that “questions the democracy of decisions and administrative practices” in ways that trouble the “perpetuation of classism, racism, homophobia, ageism, ableism, and other markers of individual or collective identity” (p. 456). However, if preparation programs expect to facilitate the development of what Dantley considers to be a socially just leader, professors within such programs must learn how to facilitate conversations that encourage the persistent exercise of critical self-reflection.

While the field of educational leadership has often addressed the importance of why a socially conscious and critically reflective pedagogy is important, there must be a more concerted effort to examine how this type of pedagogy can be developed and implemented within leadership preparation programs. Freire (2000) argues that a student’s “critical consciousness” is unable to develop appropriately in an educative setting where she/he is simply considered to be the objective recipient of a teacher’s deposited knowledge. He goes on to suggest the possibilities of a problem-posing pedagogy that facilitates the collaborative development of the critically cognitive conscious. Within this model, students/teachers must realize their roles as “critical co-investigators” in a reflexive dialogue founded upon the per-
sistent questioning of social realities. A problem-posing pedagogy replaces the traditional authoritative dichotomy between teacher/student with a collaborative model where both students and teachers cooperate in the critical intervention of social injustices. As leadership preparation programs seek to develop critically conscious and self-reflective practitioners the professors involved must recognize and understand how to navigate the ways in which race-related silences can stymie such efforts.

Examining the Silencing of Voices

There are many issues that contribute to the existence of silences in conversations concerning race: feelings of oppression or fear (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007), desires to resist (Ladson-Billings, 1996), maintenance of privilege (Mazzei, 2007, 2011), and feelings of guilt (Giroux, 1997). Yet, too often qualitative researchers fail to examine the purposes and intent of silences that shape the ways in which students and professors attempt to grapple with issues of race (Mazzei, 2007). As a result, rather than examining the silences that occur within the educational setting, educational researchers often overlook the intentional withdrawal of participants, simply considering their silence as an omission of data.

Despite the traditional neglect of race-related silences, there are a number of scholars, who in their attempt to acknowledge the consequences of silenced voices in educational settings are addressing the importance of enacting pedagogical practices that encourage practitioners to explore the reason race-related silences occur (see Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007; Schultz, 2003). Yet, while helping to bring attention to issues of race, such practices must be enacted with a sense of caution. When examining race-related silences, it should be noted that not all such pauses in reflection should be construed as negative occurrences. Though teachers must probe the race-related silences of students, they also must seek to understand how they personally contribute to the existence of such silences (Ladson-Billings, 1996).

If educational leaders in diverse communities are to be expected to successfully communicate with their diverse communities (Tatum, 2007), leadership preparation programs must seek to provide students with the dialogically reflexive skills necessary to forthrightly address the racial biases that continue to hinder the procurement of equity within many school communities (Singleton & Linton, 2005). Not only must researchers in the field of educational leadership examine the meaningfulness of silences, preparatory instructors must embrace pedagogical strategies that surface issues of race and racism, while at the same time carefully exploring the existence of the silences that often occur.
Discussion

As stated previously, despite the rapidly shifting demographics taking place within America’s public schools there is still a scarce amount of research connecting issues of diversity and race with the developing of curricula that guide educational leadership preparation programs. This scarcity was surfaced by our highlighting the unfortunate exclusion of racially-oriented social justice literature being published in the journals most frequently read by professors in the field of educational leadership. This exclusion serves as the impetus for two primary suggestions that could help contribute to the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

First, even though there is a relatively large body of literature in educational leadership calling attention to the need for today’s educational leaders to be adequately equipped for diverse settings (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Dantley, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hawley & James, 2010; Jean-Marie, 2010; López, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Tillman, 2004), those persons responsible for guiding the curricular development of leadership preparation programs must demand a more intensive examination of literature pertaining to the five critical components highlighted: color-blind ideologies, misconceptions of human difference, merit-based achievement, critical self-reflection, and issues of silence. If not reflexively explored by those responsible for the transformation of leadership preparation programs, each of these five issues can serve to stymie the further development of a curriculum that allows both professors and students to navigate the race-related blockages of meaningful conversations.

Second, much like Milner’s (2010) challenge to the field of teacher preparation, we believe these five elements must be woven throughout any curriculum chosen to guide a leadership preparation program. Rather than marginalizing issues of diversity and race to a singular preparatory course, these concepts must be reflexively examined during each stage of a future leader’s education. Subsequently, whereas the marginalization of such concepts have allowed professors to avoid the critical examination of such issues, those responsible for leadership preparation programs must challenge professors within the program to explore such issues in depth, opening themselves to the unease of critical reflexive dialogue with their students.

Although challenging at times, conversations confronting the dilemmas of race, culture, and diversity in education must be focal points in leadership preparation programs if we are truly committed to equity and equality for all students. Persons responsible for the further development of educational leadership preparation programs must recognize the cultural, ethnic, and racial disconnect that exists between the populations of students being served and the population of leaders being prepared. Identifying the five concepts we have explored in this article can serve as a good first step.
in guiding faculty seeking to develop an anti-racist curriculum for leadership preparation programs able to address issues germane to the changing landscape of today’s public schools. Perhaps when more faculty demand and expect that a more transformative, social justice-oriented curriculum be included in their preparation programs, future school leaders will engage in more critical analyses and activism for education and social change.

References


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