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The Hidden Nature of Whiteness in Education: Creating Active Allies in White Teachers Through Supervision

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Abstract

Norms of Whiteness are pervasive throughout schooling in the United States (Tanner, 2017). Critical Whiteness studies (Kincheloe, 1998) and second-wave White teacher identity studies (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016) provides relevant insight into the thoughts and experiences of White preservice and in-service teachers. This paper draws on the literature to explain the author's varied personal experiences with Whiteness in education. It is the author's hope that the experiences shared will resonate with readers and complicate racialized experiences in education, as well as provide a springboard for supervisors to develop White teachers' capacity to create anti-racist, democratic classrooms. Keeping in mind the goal of supervision – improved learning for all students through the development of teachers – this paper puts forth the argument that in order for teacher supervisors to do such, supervisors should explicitly name Whiteness and facilitate conversations or open spaces for dialogue on the problematic nature of Whiteness in schooling.

Keywords

teacher supervision; White teachers; critical Whiteness; race

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Introduction

The goal of supervision is to improve student learning and success (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014). This is commonly addressed by improving the practices of teachers through observation, providing time for teacher reflection, and guiding teachers with helpful feedback and support. Teaching practices have been refined through research, and it has been the goal of supervision to remain abreast of the latest methods in teaching. In fact, since the 1990s, following the rise of culturally responsive and relevant teaching pedagogies, there have been several attempts at combining the goals of culturally responsive teaching with teacher supervision. Bowers and Flinders (1991) published their handbook for *Culturally Responsive Teaching and Supervision*, creating observation guides for supervisors interested in looking for culturally responsive practices. Gay (1998) wrote a chapter titled “Cultural, Ethnic, and Gender Issues” in *The Handbook of Research on School Supervision*. Chapters have been added to the seminal work of Glickman et al. (2014), *SuperVision and Instructional Leadership: A Developmental Approach*, to address the pressing and essential cultural tasks of supervision. More recently, Glanz and Zepeda (2016) edited a volume titled *Supervision: New Perspectives for Theory and Practice*, of which two chapters directly address issues of culture (Arnold, 2016) and diversity (Jacobs and Casciola, 2016).

However, these texts ultimately fall short in addressing the experiences and habits that shape a teachers’ beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes towards culturally responsive teaching and in connecting the teachers’ beliefs to the broader sociocultural-historical context. The model for supervision for social justice proposed by Jacobs and Casciola (2016) comes remarkably close to connecting these nuanced and complex perspectives, highlighting the guiding principles of a moral imperative for supervision, supervision as critical inquiry, and culturally responsive supervision. Critical reflection on beliefs and attitudes, uncovering assumptions/biases, and participating in critical dialogue are some of the tasks a supervisor must take to develop his/her social justice lens in supervision. The reflective, inward-facing nature inherent in their framework is of the utmost importance. Jacobs and Casciola (2016) conclude that supervision for social justice provides the opportunity for schools to be equitable, and provides opportunities for all students to succeed, both of which ultimately change the status quo of education. One way to expand on the model proposed by Jacobs and Casciola (2016) is to add specific conversations about **Whiteness**, particularly how this can influence supervision for social justice. Whiteness adds a tangible concept that teachers can grasp, but it requires exposure to the concept over time to see more clearly when classroom practices are not equitable for all students. It also provides an opportunity for inward reflection on the self and the unconscious patterns of behavior and thought regarding race and equity in the classroom. As such, the focus of this article is to argue that developing the capacity of White teachers to teach diverse student populations must transcend the focus on identifying culturally responsive pedagogical practices to include the concept of Whiteness.

Method and Intent of This Paper

For this paper, I draw inspiration from the organization of Boldt’s (in press) chapter that weaves together sketches of personal experience with relevant research and theory that allows for different lines of thought that remain individual but also come together as an assemblage of

something new. I draw on critical Whiteness studies (Kincheloe, 1998) and second-wave White teacher identity studies (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016) to collectively explain my lines of thinking and experiences labeled throughout this article as a White person in the U.S. educational system. I write from a personal perspective as someone who has had the opportunity to transform the way I think about my racialized identity (a White woman), the identities of my students, and how that shapes what I believe about and do in the classroom. The stories I share throughout this article are ones that have been the most salient for understanding racialized identities and the relationship to my classroom praxis. They are the ones that have caused cognitive and emotional dissonance that I document in my studies, return to repeatedly as I examine my own practices, and are the examples I use to explain my work to my family and friends. It is my hope that as other teacher educators and supervisors read my experiences and connections to critical Whiteness studies, they encounter similar moments of disruption that both resonate and come together to explain life phenomena. I also hope my writing helps others to think about what they can do to support the preservice or in-service teachers they work with to take anti-racist action.

Context and Background

I am a White, female, middle-class, heterosexual teacher and teacher educator that went through a teacher education program in Florida where most classmates looked and sounded like me. During my teacher education program, I was assigned the task of reflecting on my apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975); it was then that I recognized that during my entire K-12 school experience I only had roughly five Black teachers and over 30 White teachers, including foreign language teachers. I had begun to recognize on a much larger scale racial and gender inequalities, simply from the exposure (or lack thereof) to teachers of different racial and social backgrounds than myself.

After earning my elementary education degree, I moved to South Korea to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). I did not renew my contract after my first year because I was uncomfortable with the experience. Transcending national boundaries, I unknowingly became a participant in the globalized spread of Whiteness as domination, transcending national boundaries (Leonardo, 2002). I also participated, unknowingly, in perpetuating a false-legitimacy of White native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) in South Korea. The color of my skin and “native” language determined my status as a competent EFL teacher (Mahboob, 2009). The White EFL teachers at my school were paid much more than the Korean teaching staff, given more holidays and vacation days, and took more breaks during the day. Our teacher status was never questioned. The school asked students to learn about and participate in American and Western holidays. Our students were assigned Western, “English” names. Inside and outside of the school, we were treated with favoritism. Through my discomfort, I began to understand the influence of Whiteness and idealized Western practices, but it was not until much later in graduate school that I could name and better articulate my discomfort and experiences of Whiteness.

In my first five years of teaching back in the U.S., I spent time trying to understand implicit bias and how racism continues to exist and be reinforced in the classroom. I was exposed to curricular movements in schools and teacher education coursework, professional development experiences, and pedagogical frameworks to promote culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and

responsive (Gay, 2010) practices. But they were not enough as these theories of practice, when shared with teachers, are focused on how to help students and not teachers. It is difficult to talk about our (teachers') own missteps and failings, so the student becomes the object, not the teacher. I realized, as so many had before me, that if we want to educate all students equally and justly, it goes beyond the technical training of the latest culturally responsive practices.

It should not have taken me so long to articulate and reconcile many of my moments of cognitive and emotional dissonance, however, I believe it was from my infrequent, isolated educational experiences that failed to help me analyze my beliefs and attitudes towards culturally responsive teaching that lead to a lack of deep understanding about my own classroom practices. Many of these teaching moments were interesting, but they did not cause a major disruption that attributed to anything cohesive. Reflecting upon and recognizing the long-term highly personal development I underwent as a preservice and in-service teacher, it is my belief that we can lay a more solid groundwork with preservice teacher education students and work with in-service teachers through *ongoing supervision* to develop their capacity to confront the pervasive, oppressiveness of Whiteness. Through training of both supervisors and preservice teachers, I believe we can better address issues of inequality for marginalized students, develop a repertoire of practices that benefit students of, and unpack the identity and identity performance of White teachers.

Critical Conversations Around Whiteness: A Framework

The term Whiteness can be seen as a particularly abrasive or accusatory, but it is important to note that it is not synonymous with White people (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness is defined as an assemblage, a racial discourse or perspective “supported by material practices and institutions” (p. 32). Whiteness exists as a historically- and socially-developed construct based on oppression, power, and falsehood (Du Bois, 1920; Leonardo, 2002), a uniquely modern invention that holds immense power over others (Kincheloe, 1999; DiAngelo, 2010). Whiteness should be looked at “not as simply a category of identity, but as a position of power formed and protected through colonialism, slavery, segregation, and oppression” (Nichols, 2010, p. 4).

White people, therefore, have the choice to participate in the social construct of Whiteness. Because it is not a racial identity but a construct of the actions and performances of White privilege, not all White people embody it (DiAngelo, 2010; Lensmire, 2010). One can identify as White, but not participate in or perpetuate rules and norms of Whiteness. White people are subjects of Whiteness “because it benefits and privileges them,” and in order to fight for racial justice, white people have to disown/dis-identify with Whiteness (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32). Recognizing race as a shifting, complex sociohistorical construct, not a static or biological one, proposes that teachers can learn to both *see race* and *see beyond race*. Because of historical moves of power, racialized identities continue to be placed on people of all backgrounds, so teachers must recognize this and continue to move to a place where race does not define who we are and yet is always a part of us, as we are assemblages of many different things.

Critical Whiteness studies puts forth the argument that to promote antiracist action and advocate for marginalized students, White teachers must first understand what Whiteness is, its sociohistorical construction, and their own identity in relation to Whiteness because it dominates

the classroom. It is the responsibility of White teachers to recognize the role Whiteness plays in the classroom and with students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Choosing the system of privilege and power that Whiteness represents is often done so unconsciously. Whiteness is normative; the standard to which all other behaviors are judged. If not named, it remains invisible and unmarked (Kincheloe, 1999; Sleeter, 2001), and subsequent problems of colorblindness and race evasion can occur (Bucholtz, 2011). By naming Whiteness, White teachers can be brought into the conversation of race, with the goal of active allyship.

The goal is not to make White teachers feel guilt or shame. Instead, it is to put a name to one set of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. In order to be the best possible teacher for *all* students, teachers must have an intimate, emotional connection to race, including his/her racialized identity, and work against social constructions of Whiteness to reject the current state of schooling. Keeping in mind that Whiteness studies could inadvertently re-center the conversation of racial injustice to White identity (Mason, 2016), second-wave critical Whiteness studies can provide a language and framework for White teachers and supervisors to engage in conversation and anti-racist action, which many desire, but may not have a framework for doing so.

Findings

The next three sections represent goals for supervisors when intentionally including Whiteness in their work with teachers: *developing a sociohistorical understanding of race in education*; *overcoming colorblindness, Whiteness, and the belief in meritocracy*; and *working within tensions and emotions* (as opposed to abandoning or ignoring them). In order to bring life to these goals, I am going to articulate and describe personal experiences as a method to expand on the Jacobs and Casciola (2016) model for supervision for social justice. As such, these experiences are not exhaustive but will perhaps resonate and provide a new way of looking at supervision with social justice or culturally responsive practices in mind.

Developing a Sociohistorical Understanding of Race in Education

What I once thought to be ‘social norms’ or ‘societal expectations’ are often the unmarked nature of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993). I can easily recognize when various forms of media say someone of color is ‘acting white.’ I am familiar with pejorative terms that society uses to say people of color are *acting White*. Acting White can be code for performing at a high level in school, acting in school plays, being on the chess team, etc. It is equated with academic success and going beyond teachers’ expectations for students of color in school.

What was being implied about ‘acting White’ is that *these practices of academic success don’t belong to you as a “non-White person.”* And though a student of color may engage in practices of Whiteness, he/she will never be able to be ‘White.’ By saying someone is acting White, it is no longer about the color of someone’s skin (a socially-constructed default understanding of race) but the position or power someone has. It is more than color; it is construed, identified, and applied as power.

Experience 1. In a graduate-level teacher education course, my classmate, a White elementary teacher, lamented the fact that her students have no manners and their parents are not

teaching them correct manners. She gave two examples of such bad manners: students not valuing personal space and not standing in a straight line. However, both examples are what are often considered White, Western norms. Spending time in other cultures show that these ‘manners’ are subjective, yet my classmate unquestioningly assumed this is the standard rule. Unfortunately, this only reinforces norms of Whiteness as the rule for all to follow. The problem in this is that the rule is being made simply because it is representative of Whiteness, not because it is in fact the best or easiest rule to follow. This illustrates how White people do not always readily see what behaviors and patterns are tied to race.

Experience 2. When I was a child, my White mother would sign our holiday cards as “the Lynch Mob.” As a kid in elementary school, I thought this was funny. My family of five was like a mob – crazy, chaotic, intense. However, it was not until a middle school history class that I learned the meaning of a ‘lynch mob.’ My mom believed that we were living in a “post-racial society;” lynch mobs are history and could no longer hurt. This concept of a post-racial society is seen in White preservice teachers too often. To them, racism is dismissed as a bad thing that happened to people of color in the past (Levine-Rasky, 2000b; Picower, 2009; Nichols, 2010; Mason, 2016); but now with affirmative action and other programs, racism is no longer an issue (unless it is against White people) (Leonardo, 2002). This is evident in race-tokenism expressions, e.g. *I have black friends*, that White preservice teachers often make to show that racism does not exist today (Picower, 2009; Nichols, 2010), or the fact that some Black classmates seemingly have more wealth or opportunities than their White counterparts (Lensmire et al., 2013; Nichols, 2010).

Experience 3. Recently I came across a review of Ferlazzo and Sypniewski’s (2018) book in *The Washington Post* about using culturally responsive teaching strategies with English Language Learners (ELL). The top comment to the article highlights the problem in understanding race in the educational context.

You know, this all sounds great, and wouldn't it be wonderful if every teacher had the time and resources to do it all. Teachers are already tearing their hair out trying to fit in all the technology, testing, reports, and responding to the various crisis-of-the-day in class in addition to just covering the basics.

I would hope that the writers of this article also advocate for smaller classes and more collaborative meeting times for teachers to work on diverse instructional methods like those advocated for here.

Otherwise, the only other way this type of instruction can happen – I have seen it happen, loosely – is at a school where the PRINCIPAL is fluent in at least one other language, understands some of the cultures that are represented in the school, and engages the community at a level where the staff regularly interacts with the students' parents and cultural events. (Michaels, 2018)

This exemplifies the power of Whiteness in the classroom. One assumption being made is that race is not a factor for learning in the classroom. He then argues that it is nearly impossible for teachers to enact culturally responsive teaching unless they have a lighter teaching load. His third

paragraph reinforces the notion that issues of race are primarily for people already tied to marginalized communities.

The author of this comment ultimately argues that culturally responsive teaching should not be a priority, that it is secondary, and that ‘culture’ is only for those that are not considered to be White. This results in students of color being treated as second-class citizens, their needs ignored, and being held to standards unquestioned by the teacher. The norm in classrooms described by the commenting author is that of Whiteness. Classroom teachers determine the environment and interactions of the classroom, which is informed – often subconsciously – by their own cultural norms of Whiteness. When Whiteness is the invisible norm, students are forced to assimilate against their will or be punished for it.

Overcoming Colorblindness, Niceness, and the Belief in Meritocracy

As part of the post-racial society ideology, White teachers can mistakenly assume that the best thing to do is treat all students the same way. Race-evasion and colorblind ideology is a common approach from White preservice teachers (Jupp, Berry, & Lensmire, 2016; Tanner, 2017). Moreover, it does not allow for acceptance of the fact that racial differences comprise societal differences (Nichols, 2010).

Experience 4. In a conference in which student interns shared the inquiry projects they completed during their year-long student teaching experience, the first presentation was about developing mindful practices in an early childhood classroom. The student intern started off with what she thought was an engaging hook – she asked us to read a passage and then answer some questions. But before doing so, she primed us by repeatedly telling us it would be an easy task and we would have no problems completing it. She showed us the passage, a short science passage on states of matter. She displayed the comprehension questions. The first was in English, the second was in Spanish, the third in Chinese, and the last in French. She assumed that everyone in the audience would find the task difficult and make us uncomfortable because we would all be English-speaking monolinguals; however, the person sitting next to me was a multilingual speaker from Puerto Rico. The second question was just as easy as the first for him. This shows that even through this student intern’s desire to teach her students mindfulness, she was not mindful of the linguistic makeup of the school population.

Experience 5. In kindergarten I got in trouble for coloring all the coloring book faces with the same peach crayon (the color I took as my own skin tone). At the time, I had not considered the multiple races represented in my class, including the one of my kindergarten teacher, a Black woman. She talked to me about coloring all of the faces the same color, but it was certainly something that I could not see or understand at the time. The feeling of doing something wrong lingered.

Experience 6. In my undergraduate program, I took a *Teaching Diverse Populations* class. One assignment was to complete a survey to determine how ‘diverse’ and/or inclusive our friends’ group(s) were. My survey results were that I had no friends outside of my culture group. I went home that day thinking that did not feel right. It dawned on me that I did not accurately fill out the survey. My friends in high school represented a largely diverse group: friends who

had family from Cambodia, South Korea, Puerto Rico, friends who were from mixed race families, etc. Aside from one other friend, I was the only White person in my friend group, but I did not even consider the diversity of my friend group. I assumed everyone was the same. We were all girls, all heterosexual, all either Christian or nonreligious, mostly the same socioeconomic status. I was colorblind.

In these three experiences highlight how Whiteness assumes everybody is the same. The student intern assumed everyone has the same linguistic background. I assumed my friends and teacher were the same color as me without seeing different colors. I ignored the identities of my friends as an undergraduate and assumed everyone was the same. By enacting a colorblind ideology, I was unable to understand how school and daily life could appear so differently for my friends. Colorblind ideologies such as this pave the way for White teachers to ignore the lives and experiences of marginalized students, to claim to see and care about all students (e.g. unity, sympathy, and love for all), while “continuing to make prejudicial assumptions” and preserving their positions of power (Matias and Zembylas, 2014, p. 325).

The invisible nature of Whiteness is precisely why conversations of Whiteness need to be led by supervisors of preservice teachers. By retaining a colorblind orientation, White teacher candidates overly rely on the concept of ‘niceness’ (Picower, 2009). White preservice teachers oftentimes believe that as long as teachers are nice to everyone and have an open mind, students will flourish and culturally relevant pedagogies are not necessary (Matias, 2013; Picower, 2009). Yet this is a double-edged sword: one of the greatest characteristics of teachers is their desire to help others. In their quest to help all children, their niceness can evolve into something more akin to *White-saviorhood* that reinforces racial and social hierarchies. One tool of Whiteness that White preservice teachers often employ is the performance of a good, loving helper, and sometimes a ‘fixer’ of problems for students of color (Picower, 2009).

Experience 7. At the same conference detailed above, one intern shared her year-long student teaching inquiry about understanding students’ perspectives in conjunction with globalization and pen pals. In the conclusion of the presentation, the student intern mentioned other ideas she had for the inquiry project. Nearly all of them stem from the concept of globalization as helping the less fortunate. She sees the opportunity for students in her class to learn about other countries and even places within the United States as a community service opportunity. While community service is something positive to instill in our youth, when the *only* examples and rationales for interacting with other cultures and communities is to help or save them, the idea of White saviorhood is inadvertently reinforced.

While the student intern’s lesson had begun well-intentioned, it becomes more nefarious and maintains positions of power. White teachers have been documented to see themselves as martyrs or messiahs when they go to predominantly Black schools to teach and “battle to humanize savage students who cuss at them, disrespect their presence, and cannot even read” (Matias, 2013, p. 53). Although they are professing “love, care, and hope for humanity, their students, and teaching, they nonetheless continue to make prejudicial assumptions” (Matias & Zembylas, 2014).

Working within Tensions and Emotions

Discussing one's identity is personal and emotional. Those that do so have to exhibit a certain amount of vulnerability. Almost therapeutically, White teachers need a space to enter the conversation and examine their fear, concern, confusion, and hope surrounding race with the goal of looking for concrete ways to enact antiracist action in schools (Ngounou and Gutierrez, 2017).

When engaging in conversations around Whiteness, White people tend to follow one of two approaches: 1) an avoidance of race-related talk or 2) highly emotional conversation. When White people are asked to discuss race; the focus becomes on the Other and relies on coded-language used to emotionally distance oneself, to avoid saying something 'incorrectly,' or to avoid being considered racist. *Urban, inner city, kids with single parents, students like that, students from the ___-side of town, diverse students, underperforming students* pepper the conversation in attempt to avoid using a label like 'Black students' and thus speaks volumes of how race is conceptualized in the classroom.

When letting oneself breakthrough the fear and actually discuss racism, many emotions have been recorded: confusion (Tanner, 2017), fear disguised as guilt (Leonardo, 2002; Picower, 2009; Lensmire et al., 2013; Matias, 2014) helplessness/hopelessness (Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013), resistance or resentment (Nichols, 2010; Lensmire et al., 2013; Mason, 2016), victimization (Levine-Rasky, 2000b; Picower, 2009; Nichols, 2010), and frustration/anger (Leonardo, 2002; Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013). Emotions show a point of growth in which they can learn more about their selves and their role in Whiteness. But this is not easy, as "admitting the reality of White racism would force a river of centuries of pain, denial, and guilt that many people cannot assuage" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 38). As such, one potential concern of confronting Whiteness with White teachers is the immediate jump to guilt.

Relying on 'White guilt' does not address issues of Whiteness and does little to move White teachers to anti-racist action (Lensmire et al. (2013). Lensmire et al. (2013) address this concern in relation to McIntosh's (1988, p. 2) oft-cited article on White privilege which lists observations she felt illustrated White privilege (e.g. "*I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.*"). McIntosh presented a one-dimensional list of privileges that fails to include how gender and class, among other ways of identifying, are also recognizable in the list of privileges. In response, Lensmire et al. (2013) raise the concern that asking individuals to recognize their individual White privilege and confess of their privileges becomes an individual conscious-raising activity with only "limited help with understanding and undermining systemic White supremacy" (p. 413).

Experience 8. In past classes as a student, I have intentionally not spoken up in class and not advocated for my needs as a person engaged in the same work. I worried I would be accused of speaking over others or silencing those that have been silenced for far too long. I felt guilty when my international classmates (all multicompetent users of English) ask me to edit their work for grammar or preemptively apologize for grammatical errors before I read their work because I had a socially-constructed value to my classmates as a native speaker. I was perceived to hold knowledge they did not have; this position of power led to guilt. It was not something I sought

out, but it was placed upon me. I could no longer remain guilty as “guilt is not a feeling. It is an intellectual mask to a feeling. Fear is a feeling – fear of losing one’s power, fear of being accused, fear of a loss of status, control, knowledge” (Chrystos, 2015, p. 58).

The idea of guilt masking fear is a complicated one that did not immediately resonate with me. I initially thought that my experiences of guilt were because I truly wanted to be equal with all my classmates. But in fact, to be equal, I had to give up the power assigned to me because of my identity as a White native English speaker.

Implications for Teacher Supervision

One of the most important points that can be taken from this paper is the dire need for White teachers to have a space to unpack their experiences and feelings. They need support in connecting these experiences and feelings to the greater system of Whiteness. Supervision is an ideal place for this to happen. As stated previously, the field of supervision is attempting to incorporate culturally responsive tools into already established methods of supervision. Whiteness is a key concept that ties classroom practices to the individual transformation of teachers. Whiteness provides an opportunity for internal and external teacher development. The experiences provided throughout this paper provide insight into some of the experiences and dispositions White teachers have and can stimulate.

However, instead of an approach that only looks at performances of culturally responsive teaching, I argue that supervisors should take an approach that includes conversations about Whiteness. Ongoing critical conversations centered around Whiteness are helping teachers unpack and look critically at the role they play in Whiteness performance and the identity they have as a White person. Complicated conversations (Pinar, 2004) can work in various settings to address White racial identity and its implications in the classroom. Through these complicated conversations – in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves in the present, but to historical figures, unnamed peoples/places they are studying, politicians and parents, and their past, present, and future selves – transformation can occur. White people can grow and develop in advocacy for social justice in schools once reflecting on their White identity, reexamining their actions and beliefs, and dialogue on “race, racism, identity, and schooling” (Mason, 2016, p. 1049). But it requires the close and ongoing supervision of preservice teachers to ensure this happens early and often in an educator’s development.

Ngounou and Gutierrez (2017) note that “if education leaders aspire to confront and undo severe racial inequalities in schools and school systems, they must create opportunities for teachers and staff to engage in productive discussions about questions that many of them will be reluctant to consider.” They write that conversations need to happen often, they require an intense amount of time and effort, and not everyone is ready to discuss race and inequality. Not only should educational leaders help lead these conversations, but again, supervisors of preservice teachers can and should start these conversations long before entering the classroom as a fulltime teacher.

Dialogic pedagogy can be used to facilitate conversations of Whiteness and break through current models of diversity discourse, which is commonly deficit-model thinking (Mason, 2016; Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013; & Tanner, 2017). Just as I have attempted to do

in this article, using personal stories and experiences from past, present, and future selves to enter into the conversation of race so that they form a positive, anti-racist identity, reject Whiteness, and seek to dismantle institutional racism in education. Regarding conversations about Whiteness, Mason (2016) tells us that “these stories are often messy, highly personalized, and always more complicated than an uncritical ‘best practices’ approach” (p. 1048).

Conclusions

“No realistic future for schools can be envisioned or constructed without dealing directly with cultural diversity” Gay (1998, p. 1222). Gay’s words should not be taken lightly. And 20 years later they are just as important. Facilitating critical Whiteness conversations is one way to deal directly with cultural diversity.

Common goals of a critical Whiteness pedagogy (Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013; Nichols, 2010) are to understand the history of Whiteness as a social construct, recognize the structural and institutional/system conceptions of Whiteness, and develop a positive, antiracist White identity. With over 80% of a teaching force that identifies as White, the development of a positive, antiracist White identity is an absolute necessity for White teachers. Instead of enacting a pedagogy of caring, which reinforces hierarchies of Whiteness and supporting a U.S. education system that continues to perpetuate racial inequality, it is time for teacher supervisors to discuss and mediate White teacher identities in order to create a society in which all human beings have “a concern for the humanity of all people” (Leonardo, 2002).

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