

# Cultivating Racial and Linguistic Diversity in Literacy Teacher Education

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Teachers Like Me

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## Chapter 3

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### **So-Called Social Justice Teaching and Multicultural Teacher Education**

#### **Rhetoric and Realities**

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# 3

## SO-CALLED SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHING AND MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION

### Rhetoric and Realities

Every year, I receive two to three requests from undergraduate students of color asking if I will write a letter of recommendation for them for Teach for America (TFA), “a national teacher corps of recent college graduates who commit two years to teach and to effect change in under-resourced urban and rural public schools” ([www.teachforamerica.org](http://www.teachforamerica.org)). These are not teacher education students. But they are students of color who want to do civically engaged, social justice-oriented work by teaching in underserved and under-resourced schools like those they came from, but they want to do so by circumventing schools of education. I use their recommendation requests as an opportunity to try to encourage them to pursue their teacher certification in our masters level teacher preparation programs or to apply to the five-year program: “I think if you want experience working in schools, we can provide you with that experience and with theoretical and practical training in becoming teachers.” But then again, they would have majored in teacher education if this was their original intent. Instead, these students pursue undergraduate careers in public service, political science, policy studies, and disciplines within arts and sciences. TFA appeals to these students because it provides an opportunity for them to give back to their communities and gain teaching experience as they move toward other professional aspirations. These instances leave me questioning what it is about our schools of education and teacher preparation programs that deter students. Why don’t we recruit the same students into our programs? What do programs like TFA have that we, in schools of education, don’t? Why can White organizations like TFA recruit students of color and yet predominantly White schools of education cannot? Andre Perry, founding dean of urban education at Davenport University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, wrote,

While exceptions certainly exist, the sons and daughters of Dubois, Washington, Hammer, Chavez and Kochiyama, certainly understand how to

place education in a social justice framework even within white organizations. Moreover, it's the openness of TFA to learn from black, Latino and Asian American leadership that is promising. (Perry, 2014)

He argues that not only is TFA stronger by becoming more diverse, but that the teacher organization has the foundation to become more equitable and inclusive. He argues that TFA has learned lessons on diversity—not just to add numerical diversity, but to bring people of color to the table in terms of leadership and education reform. Perry also states that schools of education should be worried. When I visit the TFA website, I see images of teachers of color working in communities of color. A featured YouTube video on the website highlights the story of a young male teacher of color who shares that TFA gave him the opportunity to *give back to his community*. Whether one supports or abhors programs like TFA, the programs do appeal, even if only rhetorically, to students' predisposed ethos of social justice and community engagement. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation reports that current trends indicate that by the year 2020, the percentage of teachers of color will fall to an all-time low of 5% of the total teacher force, while the percentage of students of color in the K–12 system will likely near 50% (<http://woodrow.org/fellowships/ww-rbf-fellowships/>). I do not intend to take up the debate between traditional teacher preparation programs and alternative programs like TFA. However, given the current and future trends facing our urban schools, in particular, it is worthwhile to interrogate the promise of social justice teaching in urban contexts presented by such alternative teacher preparation programs and, paradoxically, the assumptions of Whiteness oftentimes associated with schools of education. The theme that remains consistent in my work with preservice teachers of color is that they see teaching as a tool toward social justice—education is the great equalizer. They entered teacher education because they too wanted to give back to their communities. Or, they had teachers who made a difference in their lives, and they want to do the same for the next generation. However, there are moments of dissonance and disconnect that they encounter during their journey to become teachers, and many times these moments occur because of their racial, linguistic, gendered, or classed identities and the unraveling of the myth of meritocratic values. These moments also occur when they find themselves in a space dominated by discourses that define teaching as an apolitical, technocratic skill uncoupled from community and social activism.

It is essential to unpack what is meant by constructs like “teaching for social justice” and Whiteness and to consider how they are actualized in practice in teacher education spaces, particularly those emphasizing a multicultural or urban teaching framework. Thus, in addition to this chapter, I explore theoretical perspectives on social justice teaching, teacher identity, teacher discourse, and urban teacher education. By providing a conceptual framework supported by the voices of preservice teachers of color, I aim to talk back to the dominant discourse on preparing White, English-monolingual teachers for working in these contexts and

make a deliberate shift toward a focus on the necessary dispositions for effective teaching in these contexts that should be cultivated in all teacher candidates. I examine how teaching for social justice and other progressive teaching ideologies are reframed from the perspectives of preservice teachers of color. Preservice teachers Angela, Latoya, and Natasha were students in a traditional teacher education program where they were learning how to become teachers in contexts where, whether intentional or not, the goals of the teacher education program catered to the needs of White students. As such, the meaning and understanding of “teaching for social justice” permeated through their experiences through a lens of Whiteness as a normative indicator for both teaching and school performance. An overwhelming centering of Whiteness was the “language of schooling” within this teacher education context. Given that, I consider what these preservice teachers’ various negotiations of multicultural and social justice discourses imply for urban teacher education and for the needs of today’s ethnically and linguistically diverse classrooms.

### **Social Justice and Urban Teacher Education from a White Savior Mentality**

“Teacher candidate demonstrates a clear and consistent commitment to teaching for social justice” was one of the proposed proficiencies presented at a meeting of university faculty charged with revising our student teaching standards, a move instigated by the onset of the nation’s Common Core standards and new standards for teacher preparation and certification. After I read this desired proficiency for students in our teacher preparation programs, I thought: What do we mean when we say “teaching for social justice”? What does “teaching for social justice” look like, and how is this evidenced in the performances of the students in teacher preparations programs? What do we assume about the predispositions our preservice teachers bring to our programs, and what do we expect as they graduate from them?

I wonder about the rationale for the aforementioned desired proficiency given the racial and linguistic makeup of the majority of students in teacher education programs in the United States. At my university most of the teacher candidates are White, monolingual females from middle-class backgrounds who have little to no experience working in diverse educational contexts. My university is not unlike other teacher education programs across the country. It is not uncommon for students in my English methods course to reveal to me that 1) they have never had a teacher of color and 2) they would prefer not to teach in an urban or diverse school environment. In other words, many of them assume their career plans will not require them to be grounded in inclusive and culturally relevant pedagogies or to be prepared to work with students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. Instead, the idea of “teaching for social justice” is viewed as another bullet to check off on one’s way to teacher certification; it is not largely

viewed as a practice to embody and put into action. “Social justice” has become an overused term in teaching and teacher education. The idea is that it is the role of teachers and educational institutions to promote a just society by challenging injustices and valuing diversity through policy and practice. Much of the social justice rhetoric in teacher preparation programs, however, targets a mostly White, monolingual, female, and heterosexual population. How are we preparing these teachers to “teach for social justice”? What are the ideologies that undergird such goals? Social justice teaching becomes a slippery slope when promoted in a White teacher/non-White student context. It can easily become “missionary work” if the intended goals and motivations are not interrogated. Social justice easily becomes a tool to help or “save” populations that are perceived as less than or inferior to one’s own. In a blogpost, “The Problem with Little White Girls (And Boys): Why I Stopped Being a VolunTourist,” the author, Pippa Biddle, a 22-year-old White girl from New York City, writes,

I am not a teacher, a doctor, a carpenter, a scientist, an engineer, or any other professional that could provide concrete support and long-term solutions to communities in developing countries. I am a 5'4" white girl who can carry bags of moderately heavy stuff, horse around with kids, attempt to teach a class, tell the story of how I found myself (with accompanying powerpoint) to a few thousand people and not much else. Some might say that that’s enough. That as long as I go to X country with an open mind and a good heart I’ll leave at least one child so uplifted and emboldened by my short stay that they will, for years, think of me every morning.

In this post, the author admits to her own raised consciousness about how she harmfully positioned the communities in deficit ways when she volunteered during service learning trips. She goes on to say,

Taking part in international aid where you aren’t particularly helpful is not benign. It’s detrimental. It slows down positive growth and perpetuates the “white savior” complex that, for hundreds of years, has haunted both the countries we are trying to “save” and our (more recently) own psyches.

She challenges her own prior notion that she alone is the solution to long-term issues in developing countries. This thinking is parallel to the ways of thinking that many White preservice teachers take up when they are in teacher education contexts that constantly reinforce the idea that they must be equipped to work in urban, low-income communities. Such messages, both intentionally and unintentionally, exclude the roles, power, and agency of parents, community members, and students to transform their own communities. Aboriginal activist Lila Watson wrote, “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Thus, social justice work is not an exercise in helping or saving communities that others view as less than, lacking, or deficient. When viewed in these ways within teaching and teacher education, social justice—an intended progressive, activist-oriented idea—is taken up as a deficit framework.

Well-intended White preservice teachers and teacher educators are just as harmful to the educative experiences of their students when they knowingly or unknowingly enact deficit practices. The concept of social justice takes on a different meaning when leveraging the ways preservice teachers of color understand their work with students, in schools, and in communities. I define social justice as *an act toward dismantling power structures and institutional inequities in order to resist deficit ideologies*. The goal of social justice is to redistribute power, not to provide marginalized and disenfranchised people with material resources so that they can maintain the structures that keep those in power intact.

Villegas (2007) writes about teaching that is inspired by principles of social justice—including culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant teaching, teaching against the grain, teaching to change the world, teaching for diversity, and multicultural education. She describes social justice teaching as “a broad approach to education that aims to have all students reach high levels of learning and to prepare them all for active and full participation in a democracy” (p. 372). To accomplish this, according to Villegas, teachers need:

- “a comprehensive grasp of content knowledge, including a deep understanding of the concepts in their academic disciplines”
- “to understand how children and youth learn and develop in different cultural contexts”
- “sophisticated pedagogical expertise, including skills for creating learning experiences that build on students’ individual and cultural strengths while engaging them in meaningful and purposeful activities”
- “to understand existing barriers to learning that children and youth from low-income and racial/ethnic backgrounds consistently encounter in school.” (p. 372)

Beyond knowledge and skills, Villegas argues that teachers need the disposition to teach all learners equitably. What is missing from this discussion is a focus on the relationship that teachers must have with and within communities, relationships that include but move beyond working with students in schools.

Also important in this discussion is teacher education research that examines ways to prepare new teachers for working in urban schools and communities. What counts as “urban” is steadily shifting and changing, especially with the increase and ever presence of gentrified urban centers (Kinloch, 2010; Thomas, 2011). Yet in teaching and teacher education, “urban” is often code word for low-income children and communities of color. In accordance, teaching from social justice then becomes necessary for effective teaching in urban spaces, those spaces that some

people view from a deficit lens. The idea of “teaching for social justice” takes on a particular meaning, though, when preservice teachers do not see themselves as members of urban communities but as voyeuristic travelers journeying in and out of urban schools to work with the people who inhabit these spaces.

Essentially, the meaning of social justice for some is not the same for others. A vision for social justice teaching must account for the social locations that teachers embody and the cultural histories and traditions that they represent. For preservice teachers of color, an intentional focus and acknowledgment of families, communities, and cultural traditions are central to the practice of social justice. Social justice work cannot be achieved when individuals distance themselves from the communities they purport to serve. For instance, it is interesting when teachers are adamant that they come from or live in communities different from the school communities where they work. The racial, linguistic, and cultural divides are further pronounced, yet so much of the research literature (Godley et al., 2006; Gomez, Black, & Allen, 2007) stresses bridging the differences that persist between the lived experiences of teachers and students.

## **The Unfulfilled Promise of Multicultural Teacher Education**

### ***The Ongoing Normalization of Whiteness***

In a review of literature on multicultural teacher education, Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries (2003) observe,

There are local pockets of change and a number of individual teacher educators strongly committed to interrogating their own practice and preparing teachers for a diverse society. But the new multicultural teacher education paradigm envisioned by the theorists and conceptual works is not in place. (p. 964)

Instead, while many teacher education programs have added courses and field-work experiences that focus on teaching diverse students—English language learners, non-White students, and urban children (Cochran-Smith et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Zeichner, 1996), this approach only leads to moderate advances in preparing teachers for racially and linguistically diverse classrooms. This argument is highlighted in Cross’s (2005) insistence that “program rhetoric about diversity and multiculturalism is often couched in how we are alike or how White teacher educators and students can explore others as cultural exotics, the racial other, or the object of study for their academic and professional benefit” (p. 265). Further, this approach to multicultural teacher education may produce a teaching force that is unaware of how they can use their work to dismantle power, Whiteness, and racism. As a result, even real moves toward a mission and vision of “teaching for social justice” are jeopardized and only then implemented on a superficial level. The goals of multicultural teacher education have long privileged the needs

of White preservice teachers, though the rhetoric has included an emphasis on diversifying the field of teaching. Sleeter's (2001) review of research on preservice teacher education for preparing teachers for schools that serve historically underserved populations determines that very little of it examines strategies that are utilized to prepare effective teachers. Instead, most of the research focuses on addressing the attitudes and lack of knowledge of White preservice teachers. Sleeter also points out that teacher educators do their own work in maintaining the overwhelming presence of Whiteness, a norm that goes unchallenged by their teacher education programs. While understanding race, culture, and the interplay of other identity markers and their role in education are central to multicultural teacher education, given that the majority teachers today are and will continue to be White, monolingual, and female, such goals are at the same time overburdened by the persistence of Whiteness and White privilege.

Ladson-Billings (2005) points out how multicultural teacher education literature does not take to task the cultural homogeneity of the teacher education faculty. While the rhetoric of teacher education promulgates diversity as a "value-added factor," Ladson-Billings (2005) compares this rhetoric to the cultural deficit discourse of the 1960's and 1970's. She makes an important assertion that, while prospective teachers are required to demonstrate their ability to successfully work with diverse populations of students, many teacher educators do not model such success in their own professional lives. Ladson-Billings writes that teacher educators, "for the most part, are teaching students whose backgrounds are similar to our own, and we work with colleagues who also have similar backgrounds" (p. 231). Cross (2005) reinforces this idea, pointing out how White preservice teachers accept the power handed to them by their White professors and instructors to place people of color (who are "othered" based on race, culture, and language) under their untrained surveillance for the preservice teacher's own learning. The common cultural and linguistic norms shared by White preservice teachers and teacher educators undermine the incorporation of opportunities for dissonance and explicit interrogation of how these individuals are implicated by their own Whiteness and White privilege. When teacher educators ineffectively attend to issues of diversity and fail to demonstrate how they successfully work with diverse populations of students, it is more likely that their predominantly White preservice teachers' positions of power will remain unchecked, and the circulating cultural deficit discourse on people of color is reinforced.

### ***Interrogating Whiteness and White Privilege***

Within efforts to implement multicultural teacher education, Cross (2005) writes that there may be an unintended Whiteness ideology in which "the language of [teacher education] programs includes social justice and multiculturalism and diversity while the ideology, values, and practices are assuredly reinscribing White privilege, power, and racism" (p. 266). Cross terms this paradox a "new racism" ideology that "locks teacher education into maintaining the same ole' oppression



that objectifies, dehumanizes, and marginalizes others while ignoring whiteness, power, privilege, and racism” (p. 266). Lensmire et al. (2013) write,

The primary answer proposed by white teacher educators to questions of how to combat institutional racism, how to eliminate educational disparities, and how to educate white teachers to work effectively in diverse classrooms is to have future and practicing teachers read Peggy McIntosh’s 1988 essay on white privilege and the “invisible knapsack.” (p. 411)

They describe this kind of narrow “diversity work” in teacher education as discounting the complexities of antiracist curriculum and “white privilege pedagogy” that is needed if the true goal is to move teachers and educators toward understanding and action.

The persistence of Whiteness and White privilege within the context of preservice teacher education is compelling in light of the demographic statistics that suggest that the teaching force is and will continue to be White, monolingual, and female. Whiteness is rarely viewed as a racial category; instead, it is normalized within dominant institutions like schools of education. This normalization is significant in that preservice teachers may view categories such as race, ethnicity, culture, and language as “foreign.” This way of viewing these categories reinforces the positionings of preservice teachers as cultural tourists (Lewis & Ketter, 2004). To disrupt this normalization, Whiteness and White privilege must be points for discussion and interrogation in the teacher education context. Teacher educators must be willing to take on questions of race, White supremacy, and antiracism in ways that do not further isolate or “spotlight” preservice teachers of color and in ways that do not allow for complacent responses by White preservice teachers of color who have been protected under the invisibility of their Whiteness (Haddix, 2008).

In order to understand one’s ideologies about multiculturalism and multilingualism, and initiate an interrogation of Whiteness and White privilege, one must first reflect on his or her own cultural and social background to include linguistic and cultural location. Nieto (2000) writes:

One reason for insisting on the significance of culture is that some people, primarily those from dominated and disenfranchised groups within society, have been taught that they have no culture . . . Although everyone has a culture, many times members of the culturally dominant group of a society may not even think of themselves as cultural beings. For them, culture is something that other people have, especially people who differ from the mainstream in race or ethnicity. (p. 140)

However, members of the dominant language and racial group often view diversity and cultural and linguistic difference as “other people’s” phenomena, or other people’s “problem.” In multicultural teacher education, learning about other racial,

linguistic, and cultural groups becomes an item to check off on a list of requirements for becoming a teacher. Historically, Americans have claimed one dominant, relatively homogeneous language and national identity. As a result, issues of multiculturalism or multilingualism get identified as belonging to immigrant and/or racially and linguistically minoritized populations.

Several studies on teacher education illustrate how teacher educators are often met with silence by majority students when incorporating activities that challenge White privilege, racism, and the notion that diversity issues are located outside the majority students' realm of experience (see Ladson-Billings, 1996; McIntosh, 1989; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011, 2012; Tatum, 1992). Acknowledging majority preservice teachers' resistances to challenging their beliefs and values does not address the problem of teacher education programs that are grounded in traditionally oppressive assumptions and ideologies (Cross, 2005). Further, it does not interrogate White preservice teachers' status of optional ethnicities—their decision to claim or not claim ethnic affiliation at their convenience. Waters (1996) argues that “the option of being able to not claim any ethnic identity exists for Whites of European background in the United States because they are the majority group” (p. 643), specifically in terms of holding political and social power. In other words, White Americans do not have to admit to being ethnic unless they choose to. Waters defines the status of “optional ethnicities” as a symbolic ethnicity, that is, “ethnicity that is individualistic in nature and without real social cost for the individual” (p. 643). An example of this is when an Irish American identifies as Irish on special occasions or holidays, such as St. Patrick's Day. Water asserts that there is a difference between an individualistic, symbolic ethnicity and a socially enforced and imposed racial identity. Individuals who are racially and linguistically “marked”—physically and linguistically—by identities ascribed lower status within the larger society do not have the “option” to reveal or not reveal such identities.

When asked, “What is your culture?” several studies document that White preservice teachers respond that they do not have a culture (see Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth 2004; Haddix, 2008; Willis, 2003). In many multicultural teacher education classes, teacher educators aim to help these students first see their culture through activities and exercises that ask them to write a cultural memoir or an autobiographical assignment to “bring front and center” their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Such activities occur in what Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth (2004) call a “cultural construction zone.” In my study of preservice teachers' evolving understandings of issues surrounding language and ethnicity in America, and their ideas about how this understanding might impact their teaching and the learning of future students, I found that the White, monolingual preservice teachers who participated did not “see” their own language and ethnicity (Haddix, 2008). In a course on language and ethnicity, students were encouraged to engage in the interrogation of their own language and ethnic identities and how these affect their relationship to those who may be culturally or linguistically different.

Two of the research participants were White females, who identified as monolingual, native English speakers from suburban middle-class backgrounds. When asked to offer defining characteristics of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, analysis and interpretation of their respective responses suggested that they were implicated by being members of the dominant language and ethnicity group, where the status of optional ethnicities and assumptions of Whiteness prevailed and the idea that the dominant social group has *no culture* was perpetuated. One preservice teacher described herself as having no identifying culture, stating that she was “a mutt.”

In a similar study, Willis (2003), a teacher educator, examined students’ narrative and autobiographical writings on culture, race, and ethnicity in her preservice teacher education class on teaching multicultural literature. At the start of each course, she introduced an assignment that asked students to respond in writing to the question: “How does your cultural perspective affect the students you teach?” (p. 54). Willis described her students as majority White, female, upper to middle class, monolingual English speakers. Their lives and school experiences reflected their homogeneous home and school lives; their belief in meritocracy—that they have worked hard for everything they had achieved—was reflected in their resistance to engaging in discussions about how White privilege has shaped their thinking. From past semesters, Willis observed that students’ responses to the question were typical. Most of the White students did not identify themselves by using cultural, ethnic, or linguistic terms and located themselves and issues of diversity outside their realm of experience. In contrast to the experiences of the White students in her teacher education class, Willis noted that students of color responded to the question by identifying as members of cultural and linguistic groups. They articulated how their cultural and linguistic identities were likely to affect their teaching. Willis highlighted the narrative of a Latino student, Samuel, who began his autobiography with a description of his Puerto Rican heritage: “My Spanish is of the street, my skin is pale, which transforms my features into what many believe to be that of a Caucasian, and I have lived in the United States all of my life” (p. 55). Samuel asserted that his Latino background might be a source of comfort to his future Latino students.

As Lensmire et al. (2013) argue, it is past time that teacher educators move toward a more complex treatment of questions of race, White privilege, and White supremacy. The lives of all children, particularly children of color, depend on it. All teachers must understand their role in maintaining or disrupting the racist, White supremacist practices that impact the lives of so many children, both within and outside schools. When we live in a society where it is seemingly acceptable to murder an unarmed Black boy, interrogating the fear of Blackness, and in this case Black masculinity (Haddix, 2009), and unveiling the protection of White invisibility are life altering and can be transformative for literacy educators (Groenke, Haddix, Glenn, Kirkland, Price-Dennis, & King, 2015; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013).

### *Language Ideologies and Whiteness*

The educational research community's lack of attention to teacher racial and linguistic diversity reflects a "technocratic, instrumental-rational view" (Montecinos, 2004, p. 174) of teacher preparation. In other words, the lack of attention to racial and linguistic diversities might result from the logic of teacher education to standardize teachers' practices to the point that one's racial and linguistic identities do not influence practice. The paradoxical nature of multicultural teacher education allows White, monolingual preservice teachers to claim an ethnic-less, race-less, culture-less, and language-less identity while working, in part, through dominant language ideologies to oppositionally position racially and linguistically diverse preservice teachers.

Another purported goal of multicultural teacher education is to uncover the tacit ideologies about language and language status within society and to address how preservice teachers' preconceived notions about language status affect teaching and learning. A language ideology is defined as a subconscious, deeply rooted set of beliefs about the way language is and is supposed to be (Lippi-Green, 2004). Ideologies of language have the power not only to shape the way people talk and interact generally, but also to naturalize relations of power and privilege. In critical language studies, linguists refer to "standard language ideology" as the notion that languages and dialects deemed nonstandard, defined by arbitrary notions of language superiority, hold lesser social status to "standard" English (Lippi-Green, 2004). Accordingly to Lippi-Green (2004), this standard language ideology represents a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying spoken language that is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions. This ideology rejects the notion that everyone speaks a dialect and suggests that a uniform language is a possibility. Lippi-Green (2004) asserts:

People use false assumptions about language to justify judgments that have more to do with race, national origin, regional affiliation, ethnicity, and religion than with human language and communication. In public situations it has become unacceptable to reject individuals on the basis of the color of their skin, but some can and do reject individuals because of the variety of English they speak or the accent they speak with . . . many have come to believe that some types of English are "more English" than others; that there is one perfect and appropriate kind of English everyone should speak; that failure to speak it is an indication of stupidity, willfulness, or misguided social allegiance. (p. 293)

Although attitudes toward language diversity are socially constructed and notions of language superiority are arbitrarily determined (Wolfram & Christian, 1989), language prejudice pervades the schooling process and impacts

learning outcomes for school-age children. Deficit thinking about language variety was evident in the work of educational psychologists in the 1960's who posited that African American students experienced difficulty in becoming literate as a result of cognitive and linguistic deficits (see Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966) and other research inquiries that view the role of schooling as a means of assimilation for non-native speakers (Nieto, 1999, 2000). An extreme view of linguistic research influenced by deficit theories was that children who used African American languages and dialects were "culturally deprived" (see Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966). Deficit theorists' claim of African American Language (AAL) as evidence of cultural deprivation served as an agitation for scholarly debate in the educational research community, with scholars positioning themselves in favor of or against the claim. Unfortunately, this claim continued to justify decisions made about K-12 curriculum and instruction, as in the 1979 King "Black English" case and the 1990s Ebonics debate (see Labov, 1972; Smitherman & Baugh, 2002).

In debates about bilingualism in schools, Cummins (1998) asserts that curriculum initiatives are still bound by standard language ideologies that "bilingualism shuts doors" and "monolingual education opens doors to the wider world" (p. 447). Educational theories and pedagogies within bilingual education are tied to an American history of xenophobia and anti-bilingualism. There is a deeply internalized belief that to be "American" means using one language and accepting the dominant culture's norms and values. English only. Still today, "education = assimilation" research, policy, and practice define the schooling process as a medium for enculturation of a homogeneous American identity. In current curriculum reforms and initiatives, there exists an underlying ideology that all students need to appropriate the norms of an American identity in order to succeed in this society (Nieto, 1999).

Deficit treatment of differences in students' language backgrounds in the classroom show that negative and uninformed attitudes toward differences by teachers can be counterproductive and harmful to student performance (Schleppegrell, 2004). Social attitudes toward language difference can blockade marginalized students' access to literacy, and teachers are the "gatekeepers" to this access. One of the most serious implications of the cultural and linguistic divide among prospective teachers and today's K-12 student population is that many White, middle-class preservice teachers understand diversity as a deficit and view cultural and linguistic differences as other people's issue. There is a body of research that adopts the underlying premise that preservice teachers' societal attitudes toward different languages and dialects can impact curricular initiatives and school policies that have proven to support these students (Gomez, 1993; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Zeichner, 1996). Thus, an aim of multicultural teacher education is to encourage preservice teachers' interrogation of attitudes and beliefs about language variability in the United States, specifically issues that affect how to provide optimal learning opportunities for English language

learners and children who are speakers of nonstandard dialects of English (see Godley et al., 2006).

In a study of preservice teachers' opinions about Ebonics and "standard" English, Wynne (2002) found that preservice teachers' responses to questions such as "How would you describe 'Standard English'?" or "How would you describe 'Ebonics'?" revealed their unconscious expression of one of the basic tenets of linguistics: "that languages are defined politically, not scientifically—and that a 'language is a dialect with an army and a navy'" (Wynne, 2002, p. 211). Wynne (2002) found that preservice teachers neglected to address the political nature of language when defining academic excellence in urban education; participants seemed to agree that all students needed to know "proper" or "correct" English. One student in the study responded, "Ebonics should not be allowed in the classroom. Our education system should not cater to lower standards of language" (as quoted in Wynne, 2002, p. 211). In this study, Wynne (2002) argued that these negative attitudes and perceptions toward language diversity permeate classroom practice and affect student learning outcomes.

I found that once given the linguistic knowledge tools, preservice teachers were able to debunk socially arbitrated decisions about language status (Had-dix, 2008). The study focused on preservice teachers taking an undergraduate course on Language and Ethnicity, a course that examines how people within different cultures and different social groups define their identities through use of language and how people use language to regulate power relations. In this course, students underwent a process of confronting social attitudes and prejudices toward language varieties and dialects. The course provided them with linguistic knowledge, and a basic ability to analyze linguistic data, which revealed their preconceptions about language dialects such as African American Language and Ozark-Appalachian English (OAE). By gaining the ability to articulate a formal linguistic definition of language, students in this course were better able to interrogate socially imposed dichotomies of good language use versus bad language usage or standard versus nonstandard.

Studies that only focus on the attitudes and perceptions of White, female, monolingual preservice teachers about teaching urban children, minority children, bilingual children—versus explicitly addressing the necessary strategies needed to tackle these issues—potentially position preservice teachers opposite the children they teach. Such studies provide a framework for considering the effects of teacher attitudes and perceptions about language and ethnicity on teaching and student learning by looking at preservice teacher learning and aim to explore how one becomes a culturally competent teacher, aware of cultural ways of student learning. Such studies also consider what role teacher education programs play in the cultural knowledge development of preservice teachers. Again, the preservice teacher central to such educational aims is the White, female, monolingual teacher.

So what then are the implications of the large body of educational research aimed at preparing the predominantly White, female teaching force on how to

become culturally responsive teachers in a classroom of “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995)? By facing the research mirror on the experiences of the predominantly White, female, monolingual class of preservice teachers, preservice teachers positioned oppositionally to this norm as “other” are not in view. White, monolingual female preservice teachers are positioned as the normative indicators of what a teacher should be. As a result, homogeneous notions of race, language, and culture are maintained and reproduced. Montecinos (2004) writes, “By excluding, silencing and ignoring the presence of preservice teachers of color, multicultural teacher education is, paradoxically, securing the norm of whiteness in teacher preparation and undermining the principles of multicultural teacher education” (p. 168). An unintended consequence of multicultural teacher education, then, is that non-White, racially, and linguistically minoritized students are silenced while otherwise progressive, and even radical, ideologies and practices become normalized in ways that maintain the status quo. Progressive ideals like multicultural teacher education and cultural responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy can fail to uncover issues of racism, power, and Whiteness, particularly when diverse teacher identities are unseen and unheard.

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