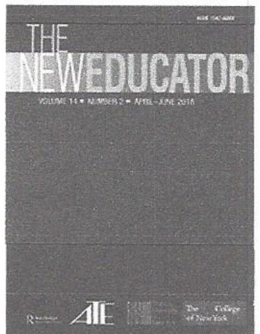

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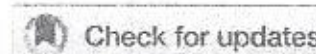

Taking Culturally Relevant Teaching to the Big House: Implications for Early Childhood Teacher Educators

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the conceptualization[1] of a foundational course on culturally relevant pedagogy for early childhood education majors at a predominantly white university in the U.S. Southeast. The course has been taught for 7 years to approximately 1,000 preservice teachers. A discussion of the complexities involved in teaching equity-focused courses is included (e.g., the magnitude of what we are asking preservice and inservice teachers to do; the depth and historical legacies that must be dismantled, deconstructed, and transformed). I deliberate on issues such as these: How can teacher educators meet preservice teachers (white and persons of color) where they are, but also move them beyond those places and spaces? What frameworks and guidelines have been found useful? How can teacher educators prevent equity-based courses from being derailed and hijacked by a few detractors? What types of supports are necessary for success? Examples of assignments, readings, and activities are shared.

Introduction

When I first returned to teach in the early childhood education (ECE) program at my current university in 2007 after teaching at two other universities for 8 years, the term, "culturally relevant pedagogy" was not commonplace.[2] Fast forward 9 years later and the term is used by most of the faculty in the program (albeit in superficial and politically co-opting ways at times) and is even used in job announcements and advertisements. Although I am not claiming to be the sole arbiter of the term at the University of South Carolina and acknowledge the wide use of the terminology in the field for more than two decades, my leadership in the program was instrumental in many of the changes that happened in the program.[3]

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Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the publisher's website.

[1]I am borrowing Ladson-Billings (2005) conception of the academy as the "big house" (a metaphor for a slave plantation).

[2]I had previously taught at the university from 1991 to 1999.

[3]Elsewhere, some of the ECE faculty members and I have written about the transformation of the program from a "conventional" program to one that centers on issues of equity (Powers et al., 2012).

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At the onset, I acknowledge that it is not sufficient to have a singular course on culturally relevant pedagogy, race, urban education, or other equity issues in teacher education programs. Understanding the cultural backgrounds and perspectives of ourselves as educators and students is crucial to being an effective educator, and one course cannot address the complex multitude of sociopolitical issues or the voluminous knowledge base. Hence, an additive approach in which racial and cultural ideas and themes are simply added to the curriculum is not recommended and is not the case at my university. So it is not a revelation that teacher education programs should direct attention to diversity issues over several semesters and should be systematic in its approach regarding not only the coursework but assignments, field placements, admission policies, and the like (Causey, 2000; Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2008). Nevertheless, having a foundational course that introduces key frameworks and issues that are integrated throughout courses and fieldwork, allowing for ample critical reflection, is important (Milner, 2006).

Having a course on culturally relevant teaching is not unusual in teacher education programs, and variations of courses have been described elsewhere (Boutte, 2012; Ukpokodu, 2007). What may be different about this course is the focus on early childhood education, as many educators erroneously believe that teachers cannot and should not address race and other equity issues with young children (birth to third grade) (Boutte, 2008; Delpit, 2007; Tenorio, 2007). Therefore, teaching a course such as this one brings with it special challenges and layers, because substantial attention must be given to rethinking centuries of information about what is "developmentally appropriate" for young children. This includes reflecting on ways the developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) movement has subjugated a focus on equity and cultural issues. Regardless of the grade level of focus, getting approval for a new course often involves replacing existing courses, which requires political savvy and buy in from faculty. Because the course on culturally relevant pedagogy is a key part of the transformation of the ECE program, it will be described here. I hope that insights shared in this article will be instructive for others who are designing similar courses, particularly as this course is now taught online. Unlike many articles in the extant literature that describe a new course, this description is of a course that has been taught for 7 years to approximately 1,000 students.

First, I describe the context of a predominantly white teacher education program that revised its program to center on issues of equity, and present a description of the content of a foundational course on culturally relevant pedagogy. Next, I briefly explain the conceptual framework for the course. A deliberation of some of the complexities involved in teaching equity-focused courses will include contemplation about (a) the requisite preparation, dispositions, and support teacher educators will need to be effective teaching equity-based courses and in centering equity in programs; (b) the magnitude

of what teacher educators are asking preservice and inservice teachers to do; and (c) an overview and some of the assignments, readings, activities, and anecdotal examples from the course. A copy of the most recent course syllabus can be seen in the supplemental data.[4] Underlying questions raised in this article include: "Why is equity work important for impacting educational and social trends faced by P–12 students? How can teacher educators meet preservice teachers (white and persons of color) where they are (Lowenstein, 2009), but also move them beyond those places and spaces (Milner, 2010)? What frameworks and guidelines have been found useful (Bell, 2007; Boutte, 2016; Freire, 1970/1999; Jett & Cross, 2016; Milner, 2010)? How can teacher educators prevent equity-based courses from being derailed and hijacked by a few detractors? What types of supports are necessary for success?"

Context

The University of South Carolina is a predominantly white institution in the U.S. Southeast that enrolls nearly 33,000 students. The ECE program is the largest preservice teacher education program in the state. At the time the new course on culturally relevant pedagogy was first required in 2009, 83% of the students were white (see demographics in Table 1). There were 10 tenure-track faculty members, two clinical faculty members, and several adjuncts. Among the core faculty members (tenure-track or clinical), one was African American and one was Latino. All of the others were white.

Conceptual framework used for developing the course

In developing the course, the goal was to make it a survey course aimed at addressing a wide spectrum of social identities, focusing primarily on ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, disability, and language. Although basic premises of the course can be extrapolated to different issues,

Table 1. ECE Undergraduate Program Enrollment at the University of South Carolina.

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	385	83%
African American	53	11%
Latino/a	7	2%
Two or More Ethnicities	7	2%
Asian American	4	<1%
No Ethnicity Designated	4	<1/2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	<1/2%
International Student	1	<1/2%
Total	463	100%

[4]The course has been offered online for the last 2 years.

some topics inevitably get shortchanged, as in the case in many survey courses. I note that *developing* the course on culturally relevant pedagogy was the easiest part of the process. Implementing and sustaining the content and associated dispositions among preservice teachers remains an ongoing challenge. Additionally, being alert to the need to update the course in response to new insights in the extant literature is important.

The course focused heavily on Ladson-Billings's (2005) three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy: (a) ensuring academic achievement of P–3 students, (b) helping P–3 students develop cultural competence in their own culture as well as for other cultural groupsm, and (c) facilitating the development of critical consciousness among P–3 students. These dimensions were revisited often during the course. Four other key components guided the course and were interwoven and revisited throughout: (a) understanding structural inequities and institutionalized oppression; (b) understanding various social identities; (c) a focus on understanding funds of knowledge, wisdom, and strengths that children, families, and communities possess; and (d) engaging in praxis (reflective actions; see Figure 1). Each of these is briefly described.

Regarding structural inequities (the first component), it is important for preservice teachers to move from viewing various types of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) as isolated individual acts (e.g., calling someone a racial epithet) to learning how policies, practices, and mores are embedded in institutions such as schools and in society in general. Complementing a focus on structural inequities was the second component,

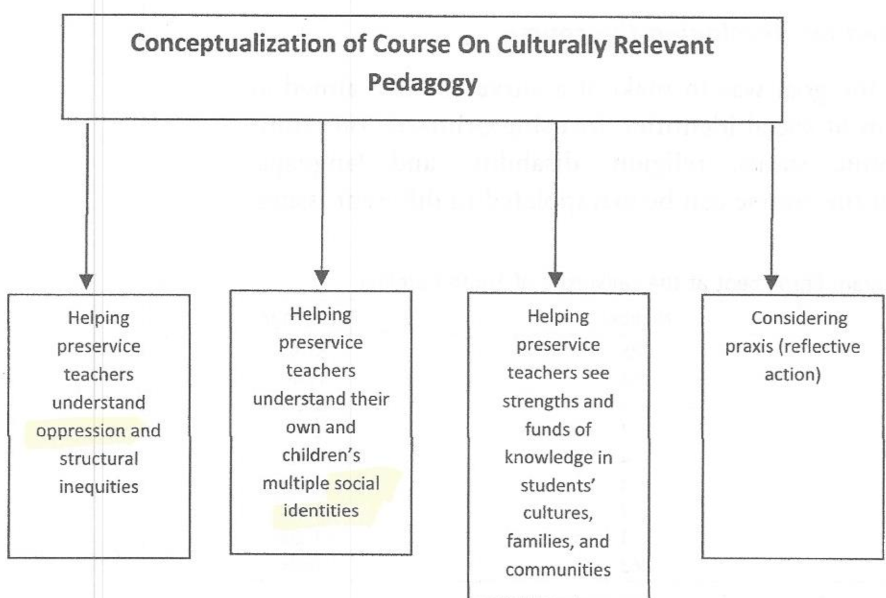

Figure 1. Schematic of core beliefs.

which focused on thinking about the various intersecting social identities (e.g., gender, ability, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, religion) held by ourselves as educators and by our students. The third component helped preservice teachers think about the strengths and wisdom within all children's homes and communities. The final component emphasized strategies for taking actions. This included ideas like collaborating with others, anticipating political points of contention from parents and administrators, and finding culturally relevant ways of teaching standards.

Because of the large enrollment, six sections of the course were offered once a year during the Spring, sophomore year of the program. Although all sections of the course used the same objectives, much depends on the expertise and interests of the professor in terms of course readings and requirements. Although respecting instructors' academic freedom to teach courses in ways that make sense to them, some requisite knowledge is useful and will likely increase the chances of having a successful experience for the professor and students.

Requisite preparation, dispositions, and support that teacher educators need

Syllabi on culturally relevant teaching abound and can easily be assessed online. A quick perusal of them will reveal that various paradigms, assumptions, and principles are represented, ranging from education for assimilation to education for social action (Castagno, 2009). More important than the course content (as each professor will have his or her own way of teaching the course) are some general assumptions, principles, and frameworks that I have found useful.

A significant body of academic literature explained many of the challenges associated with teaching about diversity and equity in teacher education programs (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Jett & Cross, 2016; Kidd et al., 2008; Lowenstein, 2009; Milner, 2011; Nash, 2013; Sleeter, 2012; Ukpokodu, 2007; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Zeichner, 2003). Examples of challenges include trying to make content on equity relevant to the majority white preservice and inservice teacher audience and addressing issues deeply rather than superficially. However, one point that is not emphasized in the extant literature is that teaching a course like this will have little effect if there is not an infrastructure in place to support it. This entails having support from other program faculty as well as from the chair and dean. When students complain either in person or on course evaluations—which is inevitable among the majority white preservice teachers (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011)—instructors need to be supported by their chairs and deans. Additionally, at my university it was useful to have a mission statement that supported the focus on underrepresented groups. Additionally, some

consideration will need to be given to how negative (and many times, unfair) course evaluations will be handled. For example, all five of the professors (enrollment has decreased, so now five instead of six sections are needed) who taught the course during the last iteration received the complaint that the course focused too much on black people. (As an aside, I always wish that students would say that P–12 schools and teacher education programs focus too much on *white* people, but alas, they see whiteness as the norm, and mentioning black people or blackness more than twice is too much.) Depending on the leadership at the moment, faculty may or may not be penalized for such comments. We were fortunate to have a department chair who did not lower our annual reviews ratings.

Instructors who teach courses on culturally relevant pedagogy need an extensive knowledge base on equity pedagogies and related issues; knowledge of structural inequities; and a degree of sophistication in understanding how to present, mediate, and interrupt student comments and actions that are designed to undermine the purposes of the course. Often, courses on culturally relevant teaching used additive approaches that do not critique or problematize the corpus of school instruction, curriculum, policies, assessment, and practices, which is Eurocratic (Castagno, 2009; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016), but simply focus on adding content or counternarratives about minoritized groups. Although this is important, without focusing on institutionalized and systematic oppression (whether in terms of race, gender, social class, or the like), conventional policies, practices, mores, and values, the status quo remains intact, thus replicating the existing inequities and social order. Additionally, preservice teachers exit these courses with the ideas that oppression is an individual act performed by *bad* people rather than understanding the endemic nature of isms (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism). Teaching using additive approaches is typically more palatable to white students and students of color who have unknowingly been victims of internalized racism (Hikido & Murray, 2016). Courses that focus on systems of inequities require more sophistication on the part of the instructor as well as a strong knowledge base on the topic, which goes beyond just "loving people and wanting world peace."

A common tension for many professors who teach courses on culturally relevant pedagogy is how to educate, *sometimes* redirect, and interrupt students who (intentionally or not) seek to hijack the goals of the course. This presents a dilemma, as instructors want to honor diverse voices, dialogues, and conflicting ideas. Here I have found it useful to remind students of the difference between individual and institutional levels of oppression so they understand that the conversation is not a personal attack. Hence, I spend a lot of time at the beginning of the course establishing guidelines for participating in the course as well as doing exercises to distinguish individual versus institutional levels of oppression. Guidelines provided by

Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin (2007) that help us understand that discomfort is a part of the learning process and how to interpret strong reactions to "sensitive" content have been useful here. I have also found it useful to focus on multiple perspectives on topics that do not have to be resolved, with the understanding that conflicting ideas can and do coexist (e.g., the importance of learning about students' cultures without overgeneralizing culture). I couple this with an understanding of how various social identities vary in terms of those who hold power as a group (e.g., agent groups such as whites, men, Christians, heterosexuals) and target groups who are disprivileged.

I spend a significant amount of time showing examples of how this power manifests itself politically (e.g., race and gender of the first 43 presidents) and economically (who the major CEOs are in the United States and the world, and whose faces are listed on U.S. currency). In general, it is useful for the instructor to be intimate enough with the body of literature such that he or she can anticipate issues students will bring up as they reflect on issues of equity. Of course, it is impossible to conceptualize all possible scenarios, but many are fairly predictable. For example, because of the pervasive myth of meritocracy and colorblindness in the United States, professors can expect pushback when critiquing these notions. My larger point is that what the professor does and knows when students raise questions can make all the difference in preservice teachers learning new concepts, shutting down, or launching attacks.

One caveat is that instructors should not expect that 100% of their students will be aboard. It takes time for them to process new perspectives being presented in the class, and some may choose to resist the information for whatever reasons. Instructors need to make peace with this and with the reality that not all preservice teachers will love them or the course. Such is the nature of the work. We could reflect on whether preservice teachers are being challenged to grow beyond their comfort zones if everyone loves what we are doing when teaching about equity.

Additionally, it may be useful for instructors to realize that classes on culturally relevant teaching may provide a "safe" space to discuss issues, but it will likely not always be a "comfortable" space, as the goal is to move preservice teachers beyond their comfort zones.

In sum, antagonists should not be allowed to disrupt the course in the name of "respecting diversity." Because it is understood that courses are not neutral, instructors should be willing to name the underlying beliefs and ideologies of courses on culturally relevant pedagogy coupled with data while providing rationales for the courses (e.g., pervasive opportunity gaps, disproportionality in special education, gifted education, suspensions, and expulsions). I also explain and help students to name the underlying ideologies of courses with which they tend to feel more comfortable.

I should point out that none of this is done in a defensive manner. It is done with a conviction that the humanity of all people should be honored, and I try to present enough data coupled with compelling stories to make the case. I try to appeal to preservice teachers' goodwill and love of children, and often add the critique that teacher education programs have not done the best job of educating teachers to teach minoritized students. I try to show how, intentionally or not, educators are complicit in the inequities in student outcomes that we see. I try to think with them about the role we can play as educators. This does not mean that families, the children, or society are not a part of the outcomes, but I explain that we primarily have control over our educational spaces and what we need to do differently based on this. In general, teaching courses on culturally relevant pedagogy is not for the faint of heart.

Professors need to know themselves, their social identities, their biases, and the like in order to fully understand how they are mediating the course. This includes consideration for how students react to us based on our race, gender, religion, language, and other social factors. Finally, as instructors, we have to realize that transformations take time because what we are asking preservice teachers to do is huge, often life changing, and often different from the beliefs held by their families, friends, and inservice teachers.

The magnitude of what teacher educators are asking preservice and inservice teachers to do

After a particularly difficult class discussion on African American language (AAL), I paused to reflect on the enormity of what we are asking of ourselves and of prospective students. Many students resisted the notion that AAL is a coparallel language to standardized English. Although they understood that AAL is rule-governed and that children should learn to code-switch, they had difficulty processing the idea that AAL can, will, and does influence what we know as mainstream American English, and that AAL could be used in the classroom at times. We are asking students to rethink much of what they have known all of their lives. Most of the white preservice teachers are in their early 20s and have lived in hypersegregated communities, including their schools and places of worship (Earick, 2009). They have been fed a constant diet of Eurocratic content in schools, which is reinforced by the media and society. Their views of people of color are often limited and stereotypical. Additionally, they have no real classroom experience outside of their own schooling. So asking them to see and honor the humanity of black people and other people of color is huge. Shifting their thinking often means disagreeing with their families, communities, and what they see as basic values in the United States.

Given this understanding, instructors should realize that such transformations take time and are often emotionally and cognitive difficult. It is also useful to understand preservice teachers' developmental levels in terms of the life experiences they have had—especially up close and personal experiences with people of color. So this means starting where students are, but not stopping there (Milner, 2010). To this end, instructors should maintain what Derrick Bell (1992) referred to as *sober hope*. Sober hope differs from naïve hope in that it allows people to see the realism of the situation and to not expect miraculous, uncomplicated changes. This is why presenting guidelines for processing information can be done at the beginning of the course, so students understand that conflict, turbulence, and strong emotions are a part of a learning curve process. The depth of the historical legacies that need be interrupted, dismantled, deconstructed, and transformed requires thoughtful frameworks and paradigms. Many preservice teachers of color are similar to white preservice teachers in terms of the negative messages they have internalized about minoritized groups—including their own.

I have found that the use of decolonizing and emancipatory frameworks (Enriquez, 1992; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1970/1999; Halagao, 2010; Laenui, 2000; Strobel, 2001) is useful. Presenting these in ways that are accessible can help preservice teachers to first recognize and then *name* different types of oppression. Preservice teachers find it useful to reflect on racial stages of identities that help understand the process of racialization in the United States, such as (a) white stages/schemas of racial identity (Helms, 2008), (b) black stages of racial identity (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001), (c) biracial stages of racial identities (Root, 1992); and (d) biracial stages of racial identities (Poston, 1990).

These racial stage theories may be useful early on in teacher education programs and revisited often. Even though most of them are presented in linear stages—which does not capture the sometimes curvilinear, circular, or recursive nature of racial development—they may provide a useful heuristic to reflect on how people are thinking of their racial group.

The big point here is that preservice teachers need heuristic tools for processing and rethinking the information with which they come in contact in the course. Like most new learning situations, information must be iterative and approached from different angles. Connections to professional and personal experiences are useful. Here I have found it useful to use books that show the concepts in action. For the course on culturally relevant pedagogy, I use two textbooks and many readings, as can be seen in the abbreviated syllabus in the supplemental data. All readings are practitioner friendly, although I supplement my lectures and classroom discussions with "heavier" theoretical and research pieces such as Freire's (1970/1999), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The final section shares a few assignments and anecdotes from courses over the years.

Examples of assignments, readings, activities, and anecdotes

To offset the misconception that equity issues are not relevant to young children (Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Costello, 2011), I often share examples of ECE teachers doing activities in their classrooms. *Rethinking Early Childhood Education* (Pelo, 2008) is filled with many examples that seem to engage students and shows perhaps that what I am suggesting is possible with young children. However, a few topics and readings generate resistance from preservice teaching. It is probably not surprising that many of them have strong feelings and often misguided beliefs when we discuss heterosexism, so I will not expatiate on this.

One topic that caught me by surprise was preservice teachers' reaction to critiques about Disney princesses. I was surprised because preservice teachers in the course have typically done a good job using critical literacy tools to critique other texts (e.g., children's books, cartoons, television shows). But when it comes to Disney princesses (Ehrenreich, 2008), they often argue that Disney has changed since the time *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1lsFjmcYj0) was filmed, or that now there are princesses of color and princesses who are different sizes. Or they explain that young children simply play with the dolls and are not thinking about the underlying racism, sexism, sizeism, and so forth. They assert that this is taking things too far and ask why we have to be critical about everything. During these discussions, we explore what it means that they have strong emotions about this and try to process their feelings using the guidelines mentioned earlier (Hardiman et al., 2007). We discuss issues of power, hegemony, and critically reading the world to see how seemingly benign and innocent materials and activities can contribute to oppression. Nevertheless, this definitely is one of the issues that will require preservice teachers to continue to contemplate and decide why they are hesitant to deconstruct whiteness and gendered identities of Disney's characters.

We discuss issues such as why teaching about issues of racial equity is important, even if there are only a few or no children of color in the classroom. One strategy is to create or purchase persona dolls (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Whitney, 2008). Persona dolls are not used in dramatic play, but are created to use as members of the classroom. P–3 teachers use dolls to represent a social identity that is absent from the classroom or to bring attention to an issue. For example, if the teacher observed children making linguistic remarks, a doll who speaks Mexican American English could be introduced. The doll may share an experience in which someone discriminated against her on the basis of her language. The doll may stay with the class or visit periodically. The idea is that the dolls help children understand the issue in a more personal way.

In the culturally relevant pedagogy course, students often have robust conversations about using persona dolls. Most like the concept, but some find it "creepy" or "contrived." Either way, it opens up dialogue about how to address equity issues in majority white classrooms. One activity that preservice teachers do is develop a biography for a doll that is need in our classroom—which is normally made up of white, Christian, heterosexual, females from middle-class backgrounds. The pictures and accompanying bios are normally well thought out and help further discussions on target and agent groups and whose voices, perspectives, and epistemologies are privileged in schools and universities. Careful attention is given to not reifying stereotypes.

Other major assignments can be seen on the abbreviated syllabus in the supplemental data. Only excerpts of the syllabus are included. One self-critique is that I could do a better job on religion and disability pieces, and I continue to work on this. For the last two years, we have offered a course on linguistic diversity in ECE, which has provided more space for other discussions as the language portion has been reduced. Finally, concepts from the foundational course on culturally relevant pedagogy are revisited and deepened in subsequent courses. As a program, ECE faculty seek to address equity issues in all courses—even in the math and science methods courses, and in courses on play, classroom management, and families. We are following graduates to see how all of this translates in real classrooms. We also spend a lot of time working with supervising teachers and university supervisors for field placements. We are in the process of developing online modules for all adjuncts and supervisors that address equity issues.

We have several wonderful anecdotal examples, but we hope to gather a broader sampling that show impact on P–3 students. One of our current doctoral students is studying this for her dissertation. Congruent with the concept of having sober hope, we still have students who comment on course evaluations that we talk about race too much or that they do not know how to teach reading because all they did is to talk about race.

Conclusion

Teacher education programs should engage in comprehensive and systematic changes, and one course will not suffice; however, a foundational course in culturally relevant pedagogy has an important role to play. Yet, even when instructors have strong knowledge bases, successful teaching experiences with P–3 children and university students, and solid conceptual frameworks, things may not go smoothly. I believe it is realistic and not cynical to conclude that teaching about culturally relevant pedagogy in the manner I have described will not be accomplished without pushback. Yet the work remains rewarding. It allows me to continue to be a power for good against

hegemonic structures and injustices in the world. Although this may be a cautionary tale in many ways—as many or perhaps even most inservice teachers also struggle to teach in equitable and culturally relevant ways—if we are to make a positive difference in the world, we must begin with young children and their teachers.

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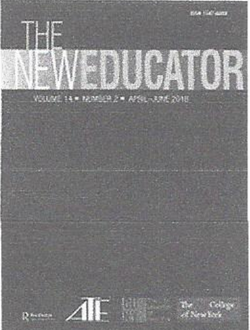

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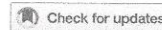
SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION



Exploring Culturally Relevant/Responsive Pedagogy as Praxis in Teacher Education

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For more than 30 years, education scholars have examined teaching practices and developed theories that center the cultural ways of being and knowing for historically marginalized youth (Au & Mason, 1983; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Collectively, these practices and theories are known as *asset-based pedagogies* in which students' cultural frames of reference and funds of knowledge are viewed as strengths and drawn upon in the learning process. Unlike traditional teaching and schooling practices grounded in the history of assimilation (Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007), asset-based pedagogies allow for deliberate efforts toward cultural understandings, critiques of social injustices, and liberatory action.

Teachers and teacher educators have been inspired by what it means to make teaching and learning relevant and responsive to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Milner, 2011; Paris, 2012). Although meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students has been a large focus of contemporary teacher education research (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Zeichner, 2003), culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy (CRP) has been marginalized primarily due to curricula and pedagogical efforts that stem from neoliberal business models of school reform (Sleeter, 2012). Teacher education programs would benefit from a substantive examination of cumulative hegemonic reinforcements that are inherent in their policies and practices. Close examination of many teacher education programs reveals that the focus on issues of equity and CRP is typically superficial and not supported by practices, instruction, curriculum, policies, and dispositions of teacher educators (Boutte, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Like promising efforts in P–12 schools, teacher education programs need to be systemic in their implementation of CRP as well. Planning well-thought-out field experiences for preservice teachers (coupled with coursework that provides adequate information, strategies, and understandings of individual and structural inequities) is essential for helping prospective teachers learn to negotiate and succeed in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Bakari, 2003; Boutte, 2012; Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2008).

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Next, Erin Miller and Tehia Starker-Glass argue that there is much to learn from white preservice teachers about the nature of whiteness in teacher education. Their analysis asks us to move beyond characterizing white students as resistant and angry, and to consider the ontology of students who do not demonstrate proficiency with course content in diversity courses. Their findings pose important considerations about why cognitive dissonance does not materialize for some white students when diversity/race is the center of instruction.

The fourth article, by Kindel Nash, demonstrates the importance and influence of centering CRP and race in teacher education coursework. The developing understandings around culture, dispositions, and racial discourse from the participants in her study offer specific areas to build on in teacher education coursework and professional development.

Finally, Joy Howard's article reminds us that teaching about the genocide of Africans enslaved in the United States and across the diaspora requires a pedagogical stance in which teachers themselves must not only be knowledgeable about the topic but also empathetic, wrapped in an ethos of love.

Overall, this issue emphasizes that praxis/reflective action in teacher education with CRP at the center requires a commitment to social justice and to people affected by injustice. One cannot assume that, because of the geographical location of a university or school sites used for clinical placements, preservice teachers are interested and invested in learning to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. We have to remember that the urban centers in which universities are located attract people from diverse cultural backgrounds; and even those who are from urban centers often live their lives in racially segregated spaces unable (an perhaps unwilling) to connect to and be transformed by the diversity of urban centers. Therefore, in addition to being in a teacher education program with a focus on urban education, the very location can further trouble and sometimes reify hegemony, structural racism, and white supremacy. Even when there is progress toward a culturally relevant stance in teacher education program and in P–12 schools, it remains a continuous journey. Teacher educators have to inform preservice teachers that there is no such thing as a finished product when engaging in this work—or in teaching in general. The minute we think we have arrived or have it figured out is the very minute when we think, say, or do something that has harmful, sometimes devastating implications on children of color or other minoritized groups that often remain unknown to us because we think we have it all figured out. For example, if teachers cannot see the connection between the African Holocaust (enslavement) and the present Black Lives Matter movement, then preservice teachers will not be positioned to teach from a culturally relevant/responsive stance but rather a "What's wrong with you people? That happened 200 years ago. Get over it." stance. This stance is assumed (often unintentionally) by educators who are seeking to be

This special issue illuminates and chronicles teacher education efforts that center culturally relevant/responsive pedagogical practices for preservice and inservice educators. It also explicates successes, model programs (Boutte), and promising practices (Jackson & Bryson; Nash) as well as tensions (Miller & Starker-Glass; Howard) and future directions. We framed the research and new insights included in this special issue around Freire's (1970/2000) notion of *praxis* defined as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). In reflecting on the world of teacher education we questioned, In what ways are programs and teacher educators transforming the world and field by using CRP as a transformative means? What kinds of actions have been established to explore the complexities of using CRP in various settings?

Collectively, the articles in this special issue advocate for teacher educators to take an action-oriented stance and consider praxis that leads to transformation in the lives of students.

Insights from preservice and practicing teachers continue to show how racially and culturally unaware they are about the student populations they (will) teach. One misconception is that, because today's preservice teachers are living in an era in which they can be virtually connected to any population across the globe, that opportunity for access somehow situates them within a postracial teaching framework. This is not typically the case. Hence, it is incumbent that teacher education programs and teacher educators consistently provide preservice and practicing teachers (both white and of color) with opportunities to interrogate their racial and cultural identities juxtaposed with the racial and cultural identities of the students they will teach. This needs to be done in ways that do not position the PK–12 students as "abnormal specimens," to be feared or admired from afar. Rather, they should be seen as human beings with agency who are connected to families and communities contextualized within sociopolitical and sociohistorical spaces that impact their life and academic outcomes.

In the first article, Gloria Boutte explores the complexities involved in teaching equity-focused courses. The basis of her analysis is seven years of reflection on a required foundational course on CRP. She offers insight into how to navigate the development and sustainability of such a course in the context of a predominantly white institution (PWI) and in the field of early childhood. An important consideration of her work is the preparation, dispositions, and support of teacher educators who teach such courses.

In the second article, Tambra Jackson and Brandy Bryson offer an example of a project rich in potential for literally moving preservice teachers beyond their neighborhoods. They write about the influence of a community mapping project on preservice teachers' development of the pedagogical tenets of CRP (conceptions of self and others, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge). The authors caution that it should not be viewed as a panacea but, rather, as a tool to assist preservice teachers in their journey toward becoming culturally relevant.

"progressive." We hope that teacher educators find inspiration as well as programmatic and systemic strategies in this issue to engage in the kind of praxis needed to transform the world, P–12 schools, and teacher education programs.

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