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4. RESISTING THE *ESPRIT DE CORPS*

White Challenging Whiteness

INTRODUCTION

In the age of the Obama presidency many claim we live in a post-racial society. For social justice pre-service teacher educators, the mythical "post-racial" context has created a certain death for socio-cultural foundations (SCF) of education as well as culturally relevant approaches to teacher education. Simultaneously the virulent racism of the past has been replaced with what we might call "racism 2.0," a less direct but equally problematic set of engagements with race, hiding behind the thin veil of politically correct language. What is worse, the death of SCF and culturally relevant approaches systematically works to ensure that the gaps between White and non-White students remain, while education maintains its neoliberal social reproduction role in the free market (Hayes & Fasching-Varner, 2015).

To prepare pre-service educators to occupy educational environments with society's most vulnerable students, we believe pre-service teacher education must take seriously the need to return to cultural engagement of students based in SCF (Ayers & Schubert, 1992; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Crocco & Hendry, 1999; Doll, 1989; Doll, Fleener, & Julien, 2005; Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003; Haberman, 1991; Hayes & Fasching-Varner, 2015; Hendry, 2008, 2011; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McLaren, 1995, Merryfield, 2000; Popkewitz, 1998; Sleeter, 1996). For my purpose I lean on Ladson-Billings' (1994) culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework by which educators might better value and address the socio-political contexts of education. Educational contexts within the United States have historically served and represented White, male, Christian, patriarchal, and heteronormative perspectives, despite K–12 students who do not mirror these characteristics. Ladson-Billings' (1994) framework suggested that setting high expectations for student achievement, enacting cultural competence, and manifesting socio-political commitments work toward equity. Such a framework, consequently, has the potential to address persistent gaps in achievement between White and non-White students that have persisted over the history of schooling in the U.S.

The U.S. teaching force is approximately 84% White, monolingual, and female (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2012). NCES (2012) suggested that over the last 25 years the teaching force has become less experienced;

approximately 26% of teachers in 2011 had less than five years of experience, a sharp rise from the 8% of similarly experienced teachers in 1988. On the other hand the Pew Center for Research (2007) suggested that annually more and more students of color, and White students as well, attend school in increasingly segregated contexts; Pew suggested that in 2007, 60% of students of color attended schools that were nearly all minority and 70% of White students attended schools that were nearly all White. The complexity these demographics reveal, then, is that Black and Brown students are being taught and socialized by inexperienced White monolingual females who look, act, and sound different from them; at the same time White students are being socialized about what it means to be White by their predominately White, female, monolingual teachers who nearly all look, act, and sound like they do.

Many teachers exit their preparation programs with little or no knowledge of themselves as raced, gendered, and classed beings, with little preparation that centers on social justice, and/or with little interaction with groups outside of their own racial and cultural identity makers. My experience as a teacher educator suggests that when pre-service teachers gain experiences in settings with underrepresented students, their "mentor" teachers have often not proven to be successful with these students; thus, it is difficult for the pre-service teachers to experience sound pedagogy. When my candidates report back on their experiences, I learn that the classroom teachers often reinforce negative stereotypes about communities of color, groups with low socioeconomic standing, as well as the historically marginalized and underrepresented. Many pre-service teachers, consequently, are underprepared to identify, implement, or assess culturally responsive teaching and learning (Bell, 2002; Cross, 2005; Fasching-Varner & Dodo Seriki, 2012; Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014; Juárez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008; Hayes & Juárez, 2012). Instead of fighting against these trends, many teacher preparation programs are responding to conservative neoliberal calls to focus on accountability by placing inordinate amounts of pressure on teacher education faculty, tokenizing faculty of color, and alienating White ally faculty, while essentially obliterating attention as well as resources from socio-cultural foundations, social justice, and diversity in the preparation programs.

This chapter shares my counternarrative that highlights the challenges in teacher education, as it relates to race and the need for engaging with SCF. My counternarrative opens up a space to talk about race and challenging the *Esprit de corps* of whiteness—this clan mentality of whiteness that keeps white supremacy alive and well and silences those who challenge whiteness (Hayes, Witt, Juárez, & Hartlep, 2014). As a result, this chapter provides a set of analytical insights that can serve as a mechanism to understand why critical conversations about race are largely "unspoken" in teacher preparation programs. Finally, I offer a series of recommendations regarding how faculty members and leaders in teacher education can move forward to work towards challenging the *Esprit de corps* of whiteness.

NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE CLAN: CHALLENGING WHITENESS

Thomas, Holly, Maggie, and the Chair

Thomas is a White, male, endowed professor in teacher education. He is in his mid thirties but brings a wealth of experiences that contradict perceptions of his age. Thomas grew up in poverty, and while he understands his life experiences may create some understandings of marginalized populations, he is also clear that growing up poor and White afforded him privileges that even people of color who grow up affluent never receive. Thomas was hired to run an elite Masters program for pre-service teachers, engaging them in an intensive single year as the candidates work toward their certification; it should be noted these candidates already possess a Bachelor in education and have completed all of the state requirements for certification except for student teaching.

When Thomas was hired, the chair was clear about Thomas's research and commitments; Thomas shared his writing, gave a lengthy job-talk about his commitments, and talked at length about his approach in his 1:1 meeting with the chair during the interview. The chair also promised that another socio-cultural foundations or curriculum theory faculty member would be hired to work alongside Thomas to run the program. A year, in the second faculty member was still not hired; the chair said, "The financials just don't add up right now Thomas; I can't get another line."

During that first year, however, Thomas reinvigorated the program. The program moved students into a single yearlong student teaching placement and ensured that all placements were in urban contexts. The program went from having lost its accreditation prior to Thomas's arrival, to being reaffirmed due to the revisions that Thomas created. The clinical supervisors were now drawing on evaluation and assessment tools in the field that were based in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as well as data-informed practice, and everyone in the program was relatively happy.

Many supported Thomas's work, but two associate professors—Holly and Maggie—were not happy with what Thomas was doing in the program. In their minds he was wreaking havoc in the department through his advocacy for urban education and by not paying attention to supporting their strategy development work from the undergraduate program during the Master year. Holly and Maggie were also threatened by the fact that Thomas, despite his heavy administrative responsibilities, had out-published both of them combined, and even engaged the students in writing and publishing articles and a book; the program was returning to its roots as a leader in preparing teachers to be scholar-practitioners. In their disdain for Thomas, Holly and Maggie made constant micro-aggressive threats and, occasionally, public attacks. They even threatened him around the topic of tenure, but Thomas persisted.

The following year finances improved, and the department chair Charles announced at a faculty meeting that Thomas's program would hire a new faculty

member and that he had appointed Holly to chair the search committee; Thomas was still an assistant professor and though on an endowed line, Charles did not allow assistants to chair searches. Charles said that Holly would be in touch shortly about the search. Thomas approached Holly after the meeting and asked when she wanted to meet about the search. Holly replied to Thomas's inquiry with,

> Uhmm, neither you nor your program will be involved. We're gonna hire someone who's gonna contain you and this program. You focus too much on all this urban stuff, and now it's time to get to the basics of teaching or these folks will never get their kids to pass the tests.

Holly walked away and literally never spoke to Thomas again until she left the university two years later. Thomas was taken aback by Holly's behavior, to say the least, but the search continued. Holly, Maggie, and their reductionist friends on the faculty were assembled to make the search committee, and they began their work. No one from the program—faculty, clinical faculty, mentor teacher, or students—was on the search committee, despite the clear articulation that the hire was for this program.

Thomas went to Charles and demanded a discussion. The following excerpt is from their conversation:

Thomas: Why am I running a program if I don't have input on whom we hire, and my decisions about this program are undermined? Are you just using me to do the work for the program? You sure weren't upset when I redid accreditation a week into the job and all the administrative work got done. Are you kidding me?

Charles: It's complicated young man [Charles often called Thomas "young man"]. You have done things you think are good and maybe they are, in some ways. So, sure, the program is reaccredited. And yes, students and mentors may even be happy with the changes. I have been here 40 years and you curriculum people always do the same thing, pushing your agendas on everyone. I have no intention of filling the program up with people just like you with all this curriculum theory non-sense. Your are not balanced in what you do, you talk too much about this culture teaching [referring to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy], you focus entirely too much on race, and you are always going on about metropolitan education [Thomas thinks he was referring to urban education, which he did talk about, but Charles kept calling it metropolitan]. One Thomas is enough for me, and so we are going to hire a faculty member who does research on strategies that work, something that can actually help our pre-service teachers. I am sorry if you don't like it, but this is my decision.

Thomas: How could you allow her [Holly] to not have anyone from the program on the committee? You know she bullies me and you do nothing about it.

Charles: I don't have to justify anything to you, young man. You're not even tenured. I know you think you want to go up for tenure early, but that's not going to happen either—publish all you want, but I don't have to support you.

Thomas: This is not what I signed up for; you promised me help. You knew what I would do, and who I am; I sat right here and told you.

Charles: Do you have anything in writing young man?

Thomas: Wow, really?

Charles: Look, this is really simple Thomas—stop making waves, go with the flow, stop talking about how kids are so disenfranchised, and start getting to the teaching; maybe that will help. You publish a lot, and when the time is right for your tenure you will go up, and I am sure you'll be fine. You're smart, so I don't know why you aren't making this easy on yourself. I don't trust Holly, I don't even think that Holly is as smart as you, but that is not why she is chairing the search. Holly will do what I tell her to do, and that's why she is chairing this search. The curriculum theory group of faculty has had too much power for too long, and we are going to change that trajectory right now.

The conversation continued for a few minutes. Thomas left the office in great dismay, and the search continued uninterrupted. No one from the program had any input, and the search did not result in a viable candidate; they hired someone who ended up working in a different part of the unit. Four years into his time at Johnston State University (a pseudonym), Thomas still runs the program, and there is no other tenure-track support for the program. Charles was encouraged by those above him to retire, which he did, and the program continues to challenge candidates to be more inclusive, culturally responsive, and thoughtful about their approaches with underrepresented students.

DISCUSSION

Thomas's counterstory drew on real experiences in higher education, and represent some of the many challenges of the "racism 2.0" environment as it relates to engaging historically underserved students and paying attention to the socio-cultural contexts that foundations work is committed to engaging.

The university is supposed to be a safe haven for thinking and for open expression of one's commitments and research. Thomas was trained in his doctoral program to push teacher candidates toward their best potential as future educators. The core

commitment of foundations and curriculum studies is questioning the sources of power and thinking with a big "E" about the meaning of Education. As the social philosopher Hannah Arendt has been quoted as saying, "The aim of totalitarian education has never been to instill convictions but to destroy the capacity to form any." As a critical race theorist Thomas would agree with Arendt, which is why his courses' engagement in socio-cultural foundations of education creates a space to understand the gaps between White and non-White students that play out and re-replicate themselves with each generation.

Despite the "back-to-basics approaches" of the department chair, the truth is that in PK–12 public schools in our segregated post-racial "racism 2.0" society a focus of culturally relevant pedagogy is more critical now than ever. Traditional teacher education is continuing to be replaced by neoliberal-oriented alternative certifications such as Teach for America (TFA), where less and less attention is paid to justice-oriented thinking and SCF types of insights (cf., Crocco & Hendry, 1999; Doll, 1989, 1993; Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003; Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001; Gay, 2002; Haberman, 1991; Hendry, 2008; King, 1991; McLaren, 1995; Merryfield, 2000; Pinar, 2012; Popkewtiz, 1998). The "limited time in training for career switchers" approach of alternative certification programs furthers the gap in experience mentioned earlier, as those programs take even less experienced teachers than traditional preparation programs and put them in the most vulnerable settings with the highest identified needs.

What Charles—as well as Holly and Maggie—fail to note is that any conversation about strategies that does not properly account for the complexity of the teaching and learning landscape will never bring about meaningful and long-lasting change. Perhaps, though, that is point: no changes are needed. The "free market" wants workers, like Holly and Maggie, as well as leaders, like Charles, to create smoke and mirrors by investing in approaches that are "known." But when these "best practices" are decontextualized, they simply do not to work. The system relies on players who genuinely believe, however, that they are making a difference. So where Holly, Maggie, and Charles treat their colleagues in atrocious manners, ironically we believe they do so with a genuine belief that their approach(es) to eliminate SCF is in the best interest of students because those types of courses are believed to be unnecessary and overly critical (cf., Hartlep, Porfilio, Otto, & O'Brien, 2015). Coupled with their genuine belief in what they do, their racism and disdain for engaging foundations make Thomas's refusal to cooperate threatening to these neoliberal players. Thomas is perceived as challenging a system on which many rely to be a part. Faculty like Thomas, consequently, will continue to be marginalized and disenfranchised so that the system can continue to run unremittingly.

THE USE OF COUNTERNARRATIVES IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WHITENESS

Counterstories (Fernandez, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Taylor, Ladson-Billings, & Gillborn, 2009) challenge White supremacy by providing alternative

interpretations or understandings of social scenarios, arrangements, experiences, and outcomes regarding individuals and communities of color. Counterstories create a space for faculty of color and White allies for expressing their personal experiences of racial mistreatment as lived experiences in the academy. These stories highlight the absurdity of the dominant narratives that are the basis of how teacher preparation operates in many places. Marcus's and Thomas's counterstories are presented relatively early in this article to expose and challenge the majoritarian stories of White privilege in teacher education and larger U.S. society as the basis for the rest of our analysis (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Marx, 2006; McIntosh, 1989; Sleeter, 2001).

The counterstory presented herein challenges the Whiteness of teacher education by helping readers see why SCF and culturally relevant frameworks are simply "not spoken" in teacher education (Hayes & Juárez, 2012). Because politically correct discourse privileges silence the unspoken nature of the complexities of "racism 2.0" in the "post-racial" Obama-era, assault on and near extinction of socio-cultural foundations is difficult to reveal without counterstories such as those we present here (cf., Hartlep & Porfilio, 2015).

Following Thompson (2004), I put Whiteness at the center of my examination of U.S. teacher education in the counterstory. Thomas's professional experiences reveal racialized, not simply ideological, differences that permeate teacher education programs. We see Whiteness as an identity that is neither problematized nor particularized within discourses on race because it assumes a role as the normo-idem, or normalized identity; interestingly, *idem*, from the Latin, represents identity but also means *same*, suggesting a parallel to the way White racial identity has been normalized into the sameness of a male, Christian, heteronormativity (Tate, 2003; Fox, 2007; Garcia, 2009).

The silencing of Thomas and his program from their own hiring of faculty reveals not just attacks that center on race, but links race to considerations of SCF as an unnecessary luxury far removed from what a teacher needs. Thomas's chair enacted privilege to marginalize the voices of faculty members who challenge the normativity of Whiteness in education, exemplifying how processes of White racial domination are enacted by individuals and groups to expressly maintain the *status quo* of the neoliberal free market.

Similarly, using the hiring process as a mechanism to punish and contain faculty who are committed to SCF, curriculum theory, and/or culturally relevant pedagogy represents a perverse mechanism to maintain White superiority and privilege. One may say, "Well, Thomas is White, as were the other faculty and chair, so how is this White superiority or racism?" That Thomas's positions and approaches advocate predominately for students of color, through the commitment to urban education, signals to Holly, Maggie, and Charles that Thomas is a "race traitor" (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996) given that they exercise dramatically different commitments as identified in their comments to Thomas throughout his time at Johnston State University. Their resistance to him, as a nexus to race, is manifestation of White

superiority. That the faculty in the story refuse to be questioned or held accountable when it comes to the engagement of students of color is highly problematic.

Moments of enacting White racial domination render Whiteness both legitimate and normal, but are very difficult to reveal without vulnerable faculty making the stories and experiences known—counterstories are an ideal mechanism, theoretically and pragmatically—to create spaces for the stories to be revealed. The buttressing and perpetuating of Whiteness as normal and dominant, through the punishment of voices that represent challenges on socio-cultural foundations, social justice, or culturally relevant fronts, cannot be easily understood within the confines of the educational metanarratives the free-market relies upon. Through our storytelling we are able to reveal persistent and problematic ways in which racism and anti-foundations approaches permeate teacher preparation.

Conversations Missing in Action

Many deans and department chairs like to believe that their colleges of education, departments, and teacher preparation programs are somehow "cutting edge" in how they approach preparing pre-service teachers for today's classrooms. Their commitment to educational equity remains to be seen, however, especially when we know that the educational outcomes for White, Black, and Brown students are not only disparate, but have been steadily so for over 50 years (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014). If teacher preparation programs were doing as well, we would also expect to see a narrowing of the achievement gap (among other indices). So what is going on in education, or more importantly, what's not going on? I posit that SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are often "not spoken," and will highlight a few reasons why I think this is the case.

SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when teacher education programs forcefully tell the faculty that diversity is the way "it is going, like it or not," and then shy away from actual engagement with diversity. This is particularly troublesome when programs have no courses on the history of Black, Indigenous, Asian, or Latinx education. Equally troubling is when programs ignore the demographics of surrounding communities where their candidates engage in field placements. SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when teacher education programs continue to put together hiring committees who "want" to hire faculty of color, but only when they teach "*just science*" or "*just literacy methods*." Yes, you "want very much to have a Black person in [your] department as long as that person thinks and acts like [you], shares [your] values and beliefs, [and] is in no way different" (hooks, 1989, p. 113, emphasis in the original). Often these searches end in the conclusion that "No qualified candidates of color were available."

SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when White teacher education faculty members and White students are offended by the curriculum offered through SCF, saying we spend too much time talking

about race, inequity, and social justice. White people are, to be certain, regularly offended—as demonstrated by an appallingly oppressive and bloody history known all over the world (Baldwin, 1985). After 244 years of slavery, 100 years of lynching, and 40 plus years of formal civil rights, we still seem to be moving just a little too fast for White sensibilities. I know; you do not like being continually "beaten over the head," as you say, with conversations about White racism. Yes, we remember, you "have this Black friend," which seems to justify your racism. And we know how our SCF examination of inequity makes you feel terribly guilty about being White. But, we would like to remind you that White racism may hurt all of us, but has lasting consequences for only some.

SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when there is a constant need to end every meeting, seminar, or class on a positive note, without subjecting ourselves to the "messy" and "uncomfortable" conversations that socio-cultural foundations requires. African American students cannot simply decide that today is not a good day to be Black at school, so perhaps tomorrow or next week will be better. And, forgive our incredulousness and boredom that you were not the first White person we heard say, "I didn't own any slaves and neither did my family."

SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when programs think they are "doing diversity" by inviting White colleagues to share what they learned on their [field]trip to Peru and Madagascar as keynote speakers for the university's faculty discussion forums. Taking your body into spaces of the other and coming back to tell about it does not make you an expert on diversity or culture; it makes you someone who loves to visit the margins of Whiteness and then come back to tell about its exoticness. We believe in study abroad, to be sure; one of the authors has been leading a study abroad experience with students to Chile for the last 10 years. But, do you really think it matters whether or not we require our students to do a student teaching practicum or an internship abroad when neither you nor they know how to unpack your collective "first world" White privileges?

SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when teacher education programs indignantly protest and charge faculty of color with reverse racism when they tell you that they deliberately and explicitly put the perspectives and experiences of racialized peoples at the center of their research and teaching, even though you do the same for Whiteness. Faculty of color sit in meetings where most of the faculty participants are White, except for the token people of color who are often untenured junior faculty, yet people of color are the racist ones? It is not progress just because you pulled the knife you stabbed someone with out a little bit or even all the way. Indeed, it is not progress until you admit that it was you who stabbed in the first place.

Finally, SCF and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education are "not spoken" when teacher education programs are astonished, even indignant and outraged, that people of color and White allies had the audacity to question and criticize the many efforts and awards White liberals receive for helping the racialized

other and working in the racialized other's neighborhoods and schools. Why should you have to keep proving that you are one of the good Whites who get it?; every time you do you are trusted less. Well-behaved (Juárez & Hayes, 2010) people of color do indeed serve as a marvelous means of helping White people to fulfill the obligation of nobility to the ignoble (Du Bois, 1920, cited in Lewis, 1995, p. 554).

The need for the perspective of SCF, social justice, curriculum theory, and culturally relevant pedagogy is more needed now than ever. An uncomfortable silence fills the halls of the academy. Where noise is made it often has to be buried in the counternarrative, not open for all to see. When social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy through SCF becomes "spoken" in our programs, the narratives of folk like Thomas do not have to hide and lurk in the deep dark alleys in the margins of Whiteness.

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