

**Working Toward Racial Justice and Equity
in a Predominately White Professional Development**

Terry Husband
Illinois State University

Abstract: Much has been documented about the experiences of white teachers as they work toward racial equity and justice in professional development school programs. Relatively little has been documented about the experiences of non-white PDS faculty members as they work toward accomplishing these goals. In this autoethnography, I discuss my experiences as a Black male Clinical and Student Supervisor and University faculty member who works toward racial justice in a predominately white PDS program. Implications for practice and policy are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Professional Development School; Autoethnography, Race, Racial Justice, Racism, Supervisor

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

- 1) A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
- 4) A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.

Introduction

Recent census data indicate that U.S. classrooms continue to become increasingly racially diverse as we journey through the remainder of the 21st Century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). At the same time, the teaching force remains largely white and middle class (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Given these demographic disparities, it is necessary and essential for teacher educators to prepare the next generation of teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to identify, resist, and reify various forms of racial injustice in schools and classrooms. To date, much has been written about the experiences of (white) teachers as they work toward teaching for racial justice and equity (e.g., Goldenberg, 2017; Miller, 2020; Jupp, Berry, & Lensmire, 2016; Picower, 2009). Nonetheless, relatively little has been written about the experiences of Black teacher educators as they work toward racial justice and equity in predominantly white contexts. Even more so, no studies have documented the experiences of a Black male teacher educator and university supervisor as he works toward racial justice and equity in a predominately white professional development school and university partnership. Accordingly, the purpose of this autoethnography is to examine my experiences (as a Black male teacher educator and university supervisor) working toward racial justice and equity in a predominantly white professional development school program. The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of my experiences as a Black male teacher educator and university supervisor working toward racial justice and equity in a predominantly white professional development school program?
2. How does race and racism shape and influence the nature of these experiences?

This study is significant for three reasons. First, much of the extant scholarship on this topic related to anti-racist teacher education centers the experiences of white teachers and teacher educators. While these experiences are definitely important and warranted, especially considering the demographics of the teaching force in the United States, very little has been written about the experiences of Black teacher educators as they navigate the terrain of predominantly white professional development school programs. Hence the findings from this study provide valuable insights into ways in which Black faculty in particular and other faculty of color in general might navigate the pitfalls of whiteness and racism as they work toward racial justice and equity in predominantly white professional development school programs.

Another reason this study is significant is because it documents my *first-hand* experiences while serving in a PDS program for several years. Due to the fact that this study is a first-hand account of my experiences, it captures many of the nuances and complexities that may have been overlooked and undocumented in other forms of inquiry related to this topic. For these two reasons, I believe the findings from this study provide valuable implications for both theory and practice related to professional development schools and anti-racist teacher education.

The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) recently revised and released the “Nine Essentials” document that might/should be used to define, inform, and inspire work in and across professional development schools and partnerships in a variety of different settings and contexts (NAPDS, 2021). One of the Nine Essentials in this document deals with a commitment to reflective practice and responsive action. Essentially, individuals engaged in PDS work should reflect on the policies, practices, and processes that transpire in their particular PDS partnership as a means of promoting and enacting social justice and equity

based outcomes. In keeping with this line of thinking, this study provides an opportunity for me to reflect critically on systemic issues of racial justice and equity that shape and guide the policies, practices, and processes that comprise the predominately white PDS program I serve in. Furthermore, this reflection will help me as I take future steps toward accomplishing racial equity and racial justice within this program.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilizes a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework. CRT was developed by legal scholars as a way of analyzing how racism operates within legal scholarship. Educational scholars have applied CRT to educational research as a way of identifying how racism and whiteness exist and operate in school policies, practices, and programs. The scholarship related to CRT is diverse and discursive in nature. For the purposes of this article, I draw from five specific tenets of CRT. These tenants include: a) the permanence of race in all aspects of society; b) interest convergence; c) challenging dominant ideologies; d) counter storytelling; and e) commitment to social justice.

Regarding the first tenant, the permanence of race, CRT points out that racism exists in all forms and facets of American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As such, racism is an inevitable and enduring part of every institution in the United States. Therefore, it is necessary for scholars to move beyond a color-blind analysis of race and racism and toward a color-conscious approach that highlights, underscores, and reveals the ways in which individual and institutionalized forms of racism shape and motivate policies, programs, and practices within American society. For the purposes of this study, a racialized lens is used to underscore my experiences as a Black teacher educator and university supervisor who is working in a predominantly white professional development program school program.

The second tenet of CRT, interest convergence, postulates the idea that Black people will only receive victories related to racial justice and equity when the interest of both Black and White people in society correspond. Derek Bell (1994) argues that this is best exemplified in the classic 1954 *Brown versus the Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision that provided racial advancement for both white and Black groups and society. In clear terms, interest convergence assumes that white people are more likely to be engaged in anti-racist practices, policies, and programs in schools when their interests converge with the interests of Black people. For the purposes of this study and drawing from this tenet, I argue that racial justice and equity can be difficult to accomplish in PDS programs when these interests do not directly converge with the broader interests of the white gatekeepers and stakeholders involved.

Because racism and other forms of oppression are pervasive in all aspects of our society, CRT scholars work explicitly toward identifying, resisting and countering the dominant ideologies of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Some examples of these racist and dominant ideologies include but are not limited to the following: color blindness, meritocracy, achievement gaps, and labeling. Furthermore, CRT seeks to provide a systemic and alternative explanation for these frequently taken for granted ideologies related to race, equity, and racism.

Much of the research and scholarship associated with race and racism tends to focus on broad narratives that minimize and/or ignore the experiences of people of color (Pollock, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As such, counter storytelling provides an opportunity and space for the experiences and voices of people of color to be highlighted and foregrounded (Lynn & Dixson, 2013). CRT provides opportunities and spaces for people of color to resist and push back against

the deficit and pathological narratives about their experiences in the world in general and their experiences in schools and classrooms in particular. For the purposes of this study, I provide a collection of vignettes or counter stories that highlight the ways in which racism operates throughout the dynamics of this predominantly white PDS program.

CRT is explicitly and deeply concerned about and committed to racial justice for people of color in society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn & Dixson, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Consequently, CRT seeks to provide transformative responses and solutions to racial injustice and oppression in various policies, programs, and practices in the world. To this end, CRT seeks to empower people of color and other marginalized groups with the tools necessary to recognize, resist, and eradicate racism. In this vein, CRT was applied in this study as a means of identifying racial problems and strategizing potential solutions for these problems.

Literature Review

Black male educators make up approximately 2% of the public teaching force in the United States (Bryan & Browder, 2013). As a result, there is a tremendous dearth of research on Black male educators at both the P-12 and collegiate levels. For the purposes of this literature review, I review studies related to Black male educators at both the P-12 and post-secondary levels. It is my belief that this scholarship will provide both a context and warrant for the present study.

Black Male Educators in P-12 Contexts

Scholars (e.g., Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Noguera, 2003) have long associated a direct correlation between Black male educators and a wide range of positive social and academic outcomes among students. For example, Brockenbrough (2012) points out that Black male educators often provide a significant degree of positive support and encouragement to their students while simultaneously serving as positive male role models. Even more so, a number of studies (e.g., Brown, 2009; Howard, 2014; Lynn, 2006) suggest that Black male educators are more proficient at meeting the needs of diverse learners than white teachers. To this end, several studies (e.g., Kunjufu, 2007; Lewis & Toldson, 2013; Lynn, 2006; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Milner, 2010) suggest that Black male educators are able to make a positive impact with Black male students in particular. This is primarily due to the fact that many Black male educators understand the unique lived experiences of Black males in P-16 educational contexts (Howard, 2014).

Brooms (2017) points out that Black male educators often exhibit high levels of care or “other fathering” with their students. That is, Black male educators often treat their students in “fatherly” ways that are caring, nurturing and supportive. As a result of being treated with high levels of care by Black male educators, many students report feeling supported, validated, and affirmed. Ultimately, this form of support has led to positive social and academic outcomes for many Black students. It is important to note here that the nature of this other fathering role is very dynamic and discursive. For example, for some students, the other-fathering role involves Black male educators to serve as a person for his student to confide in and counsel with during difficult challenges. For other students, the other-fathering role often translates into Black male educators providing discipline and direction for students.

A number of studies (e.g., Bridges, 2011; Lynn, 2006, Milner, 2016) show that Black male educators are motivated to enter and stay in the profession for several unique reasons. For example,

Lynn (2006) points out that many Black male educators often enter the profession as a means of improving the quality of life for other Black students. In this sense, many Black male educators see education as a way of helping other Black students transcend negative social, political, economic, and personal circumstances and realities. As a result, many Black male educators see themselves as surrogate family members for other Black students in need. Yet and still, for other Black male educators, teaching is a form of service and a commitment toward improving and edifying the Black community in general. Interestingly, Bianco et al. (2011) found that having a Black male educator was a significant factor behind many Black pre-service teachers deciding to enter the teaching profession. While the previously mentioned body of scholarship definitely provides valuable insights into the teaching and learning relationships between Black male educators and diverse student populations, very little is known about the relationship between Black male educators working with a predominately white student population. The present study attempts to address this gap within the scholarship.

Black Males Educators in Higher Education

Unfortunately, Harper (2009) points out that the educational experiences of Black male educators in higher educational contexts tend to be largely negative and dismal in nature. Similarly, other scholars (e.g., Johnson, 2013 & Warren, 2013) point out that this phenomena is particularly true for Black male educators who work in predominantly white institutions. For example, studies (e.g., Harper, 2009; Johnson, 2013) show that Black male educators are often stereotyped in ways that call into question their intellectual ability and aptitude. In addition, Black male educators often feel like they are under surveillance as they work in predominantly white institutions (Harper, 2013). The present study draws from and extends this body of scholarship in particular.

A number of studies (e.g. Bell, 1994; Dantley, 2010; Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2014; Johnson & Bryan, 2017) show that Black male faculty members often take on the role of a social justice advocate as they navigate whiteness and white supremacy in higher educational contexts. Notably, these roles often lead to unintended and negative consequences such as racial battle fatigue, professional alienation, and racialized abuse and trauma as Black male faculty members navigate the pathways of tenure and promotion and beyond. The present study extends this body of scholarship as it examines my experiences while working toward racial justice and equity in a predominately white professional development school program.

Research Design

An autoethnographic research design was used to conduct the study. In short, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2005) succinctly define autoethnography as a systematic approach to research and writing (graphy) that aims to describe and analyze the firsthand experiences of an individual (auto) while engaged in particular social and cultural experiences (ethno). In other words, autoethnography involves the study of self and the social and cultural phenomena surrounding one's self simultaneously. As a result, autoethnography is typically written as a highly personalized narrative that captures the nuances and complexities of the social and cultural environment surrounding one's personal experience (Spry, 2001). For this reason, autoethnography is often viewed as a form of scholarly inquiry that challenges and moves beyond traditional forms of post-positivist inquiry, as it documents human experience from a unique first-hand perspective (Jones,

2008). For the purposes of this study, I was not only interested in my experiences as a Black teacher educator and university supervisor who is/was working in a predominantly white PDS program, I was also interested in describing and analyzing the nature of the context in which these experiences occurred. Hence, I deemed autoethnography to be the appropriate research design for this study.

Autoethnography is viewed as both a process and product of systematic inquiry.

It is important to note that autoethnography is not conducted according to a rigid, predetermined, specified formula or process. Nonetheless, Jones (2008) identifies six distinctive characteristics of autoethnographic research. These characteristics involve: a) reciprocity; b) reflexivity; c) dialogue; d) personal narrative; e) evocative stories as a call for social action; and f) embodied engagement as a prerequisite for change. Regarding the notion of reciprocity, autoethnographers are committed to conducting research in ways that move beyond self-exploration and toward a common good. Next, regarding the notion of reflexivity, autoethnographers strive to remain reflexive in all of their processes as a means of becoming aware of and understanding his or her beliefs, biases, emotions, and experiences. As both the researcher and researched in the study, autoethnographers remain open to dialogue about his or her experiences within a particular social and cultural context. Moreover, autoethnographers intentionally use narrative and storytelling to evoke particular responses by the reader. Finally, autoethnographers view autoethnography as a pathway to social change and justice. To this end, I chose autoethnography as both a process and product that could potentially lead toward racial justice and equity in this particular PDS program.

Research Design

Autoethnographer

I am the primary participant in the study (Ellis & Bochner, 2011) I am a Black, Cisgendered, Christian man. Both of these identities impact the ways in which I see the world and show up in it on a daily basis. The intersection of these two identities also influence and drive the decisions I make as a teacher educator and university supervisor. I have worked in my current position for nearly 11 years. As an early childhood teacher educator, I typically teach undergraduate literacy courses that lead to an initial teaching license in birth through 2nd grade educational settings. I am a strong advocate for social justice. My commitment to racial justice and equity is deeply rooted in both my racial identity and my faith. As a Black person in the United States, I believe it is my responsibility to work toward identifying, disrupting, and eradicating racism wherever feasible. At the same time, as a Christian, I believe combating racism is closely linked to the “Golden Rule” of “doing unto others as I would have them do unto me”. It has long been my belief and philosophy that education can serve as a means of combating racial injustice and inequity in schools and classrooms. Consequently, I have worked diligently to infuse anti-racist perspectives into all of the courses I teach. I have re-designed and re-imagined many of my courses to include assignments, activities, and readings that encourage my students to think critically about issues related to race, racial diversity, and racial justice.

Setting and Program Description

I currently work at a mid-sized doctoral institution in the Midwest portion of the United States. Approximately 21,000 students attend the university at-large. The College of Education in

which I serve is composed of three different departments. My department is largely responsible for preparing teacher candidates for an initial teaching license in specific areas such as early childhood education, elementary education, bilingual education, and secondary education. My department has a relatively large student enrollment, with over 1,000 teacher candidates enrolled at any given semester. Although our teacher education programs have been lauded for their success on a number of different state and national metrics, we are nonetheless experiencing challenges related to issues of diversity and equity. For example, in my 10 and a half years here, we have been very slow to diversify our faculty and hire more Black faculty members. At the same time, we have been unsuccessful in our efforts to increase the number of students of color in our programs. Unfortunately, through both informal inquiries and surveys, we have found that many of the students of color who are in our programs often report having negative and racist experiences and interactions in their coursework and their field placement experiences. In this sense, like many “top” teacher education programs in the United States, my department represents a bit of a paradox. On one hand, it can be characterized as a leading and successful teacher education entity in the state and the region. On the other hand, it can also be characterized as a program that is somewhat hostile toward students of color and slow to make significant progress related to diversifying the faculty along the lines of race.

The majority of faculty members in my department self-identify as white. In addition, as consistent with the demographic trends in the teaching force in the U.S. at-large, the majority of students in the courses I teach tend to be white, female, and middle class. To put things in perspective, I have had less than 10 Black female teacher candidates in my 10 and a half years here at my institution. Even more disconcerting, I have never had the opportunity of teaching a Black male early childhood or elementary teacher candidate. My department currently has a total of 39 tenure line faculty members, not including adjunct instructors. Including myself, there are only three Black tenure line faculty team members in my department.

In addition to teaching courses on campus each semester, I have been serving as the early childhood education professional development school university liaison since the fall of 2012. As a part of this role, I am responsible for facilitating workshops for teacher candidates throughout the year as well as supervising a cohort of approximately 18 to 24 pre-service teacher candidates each year. The pre-service teacher candidates are placed in elementary schools in the two local school districts that surround the university. Compared to traditional student teaching experiences at most universities, this program is unique, in that it lasts 9 months. Teacher candidates begin their experiences in August when the elementary schools open and culminate their clinical/student teaching experiences in early May. The teacher candidates who are involved in this program serve at their assigned sites three days per week for approximately six and a half hours each day during the Fall semester. The teacher candidates serve at their assigned sites five days per week during the Spring semester. Teacher candidates are admitted into this program through an application and interview process. It is important to note here that the majority of the cooperating teachers who are involved in this program are overwhelmingly white, female, and middle class as well. To date, I have never had the opportunity of working with a cooperating teacher who was not white while working in this PDS program. The dynamics of the university classroom environment and the clinical/student teaching contexts often provide a significant degree of social, cultural, and racial complexity, isolation, and alienation for me. To put it plainly, as a Black man, I find myself teaching almost exclusively white women and collaborating with exclusively white cooperating teachers and administrators on a regular basis.

Data Collection Sources

Data collection for this study involved three sources: journal entries, emails, and PDS related artifacts from students and cooperating teachers. Because I am the primary participant in this study, I used journal entries as a major source of data. I have been capturing my experiences over the last 4 years or so. Initially, the journal entries served as a place for me to document, reflect, and more or less “vent” about my experiences in the PDS program. Over time, the journal entries were developed into narratives and used in the data analysis process of this study. I used the narratives to expound upon my thoughts, reactions, and emotions related to significant events I experienced throughout my interactions with cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers in the PDS program. In keeping with the principles of autoethnographic research presented above and in an effort to capture the richness of my experiences, I intentionally chose to write the stories from a first person point of view. At the same time, my desire is for readers to make personal connections and situate themselves within the stories that are presented in the data analysis portion of this article.

Data Analysis

My data analysis process involved three steps: coding, categorizing, and narrative writing. In keeping with a grounded theory (Charmaz, 1996) approach to data analysis, I began by reading through the journal entries and assigning codes. I engaged in both open-ended and closed-ended coding processes. First, I developed descriptive codes and assigned the codes based on the topics in the data (Saldaña, 2009). Descriptive codes were assigned to individual sentences and/or entire sections of data. Next, I re-read the data and assigned closed ended codes based on specific patterns that were beginning to emerge related to my research questions. I paid special attention to identifying specific events as well as the emotions and reactions I experienced as I participated in these events over time.

During the second step in my data analysis process, I developed analytical categories and sorted the data into these categories. During this step, I paid special attention to the larger social and cultural dynamics that were occurring at the time. The third step in my data analysis process involved generating short vignettes/stories to capture the gist of my experiences related to race and racism while working in the PDS program. During this process I engaged in sociological inspection and emotional recall (Ellis, 1999, p. 671). This process allowed me to better remember and understand the social and cultural context and emotions that occurred therein. This process was especially important when recalling the particularities of stories that happened a few years ago. I used a CRT lens to help me construct meaning related to race, racism, whiteness, and racial justice. Finally, I selected and revised the three vignettes in ways to make them concise and powerful for the reader.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Given the overall nature of autoethnographic research, terms like reliability, validity, and generalizability are not very relevant and/or applicable to this study. Instead, autoethnographers often work toward establishing the rigor, trustworthiness, and credibility of their work using alternative means (Ellis, 2011). While autoethnographers often place a tremendous value on

narrative truth, it must not be overlooked that the human memory is imperfect and may often have difficulty recalling events exactly as they were experienced (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Hence, I worked toward increasing and establishing the trustworthiness of this research in three ways. First, I engaged in a critical self-reflexive process (Ellis, 2011). Being both the researcher and researched in the study, I re-read the narratives multiple times while considering my experiences from multiple perspectives. This gave me some degree of distance from the data and allowed me to interpret and re-interpret the experiences from multiple vantage points. To contribute to my credibility as the researcher in the study, I included as much of the background information and nuances as possible. I attempted to provide a thick description (Denzin, 1989) of my experiences and the settings in which I participated.

In addition to being critically self-reflexive throughout the study, I also triangulated (Denzin, 1989) the data to verify assertions that were being made. For instance, when I noticed that the concept of “microaggression” was beginning to emerge from the data, I looked for and located multiple data sources to confirm this assertion prior to writing the narratives. Furthermore, as Cresswell (1998) points out this process enhances the validity of the findings that are reported in the subsequent section of this article.

Findings

In the section that follows, I present a series of vignettes related to three major themes that emerged from the data analysis process. These themes include: microaggressions; linguistic racism, and colorblindness within the curriculum. Indeed, it is certainly not possible to share every aspect of every narrative related to these major themes in this article. Therefore I purposely include vignettes I believe that capture and represent the ways in which racism functions within this predominantly white PDS program. Furthermore, the names of students, teachers, and schools have been changed to protect the anonymity of all parties involved.

Vignette 1: Do you really have a Ph.D.?

I arrived at the PDS site 20 minutes early to observe my student teach a lesson. Having been relatively new to the town at the time, I gave myself a little bit of extra time to arrive at each school in case I got lost. Also, being a Black person who was walking into a predominantly white school setting, I didn't want the pervasive stereotype threat (Steel & Aronson, 1995) of Black folks being late to show up and work against me. Whereas many of my white colleagues may be given the benefit of the doubt for being tardy for reasons such as traffic, car issues, and or not knowing exactly where to go, I assumed that the white teachers and administrators at the PDS sites would be less gracious toward me because of my race. Therefore, I always conducted myself in a way that was consistent with what Cooper (2017) calls “respectability politics”. This includes how I dressed as well as how I interacted with all of these staff members at each site. For instance, at the bare minimum, I always wore a freshly ironed shirt with a tie and slacks. At times, I even wore a suit jacket and a bow tie. I guess you can say that I believed on some level that presenting myself in a particular way would lessen the amount of potential discrimination and or bias I might potentially experience on the basis of race.

After sitting in the car for about 10 minutes or so and organizing my observation forms on my laptop, I got out of the car and made my way to the front entrance of the school. I was used

to having to be buzzed in and had rehearsed a response for when the front office asked, "How can I help you?" I typically replied by saying, "Hi, my name is Doctor Husband and I'm here to observe a student in Mrs. _____'s classroom." Typically, the secretary would buzz me into the school and I would make my way into the office to sign in. The office secretary typically asked to see my university badge and after that I was given instructions about where to go to visit a particular classroom.

On this particular morning, I made my way down the hall to Room 7 and introduced myself to Mrs. Wilson, the cooperating teacher. Mrs. Wilson appeared to be in her late 20s or early thirties. She made a place for me to sit in the back of the room as I observed my student teacher while she taught a whole class literacy lesson. After completing her lesson, I walked with my student teacher to the Teachers' Lounge to give her feedback on her lesson. After we finished our 15-minute conference, my student and I made our way back to the classroom. My student teacher stepped in the classroom and took over responsibility for the class. I then made my way back over to the cooperating teacher's desk and asked her politely if she had a few minutes to chat about my student's progress. We walked to the far end of the classroom where we wouldn't disturb the rest of the children in the classroom as we began talking. "How is she doing?", I said. "She is doing really well," the teacher responded. "That's awesome to hear!", I said. "Do you have any additional questions or concerns for me before I leave?" "Sure", she said. She lowered her voice and moved closer toward me like she was about to tell me a secret. "Are you really a doctor?", she asked. At that moment I was completely shocked because I had never had anyone in my life question whether or not I had earned the title of Doctor. While restraining my frustration, I gave her a half-hearted smile and responded "yes". It was my hope that this would be the end of that discussion. Unfortunately it was not. She asked another question. "Like how? You look so young! How did you do it? Did you go to school online or something?" At this point I really wanted to respond in a negative manner. However, I thought about the potential negative backlash and political consequences this could cause. I also thought about if my other colleagues are questioned about their professional qualifications when they meet cooperating teachers for the first time. To avoid a scene, I explained to her that I taught full-time while working part-time on my doctorate degree at The Ohio State University for 7 years. Judging by the look on her face, I could tell that she was both surprised and confused by my response. How could it be that a relatively young Black man (I was 34 years old at the time) could have a Ph.D.? To ease the awkwardness at the moment, she began talking about her desire to go back and get her Master's degree. She also talked about never really having the time to do so considering her family and teaching responsibilities at the moment. Not knowing what else to say, I quickly told her goodbye and wished her a great day.

Nadal (2011) points out that it is quite common for Black people to experience microaggressions on a regular basis in their professional environments. In this particular vignette, I experienced a form of microaggression called a micro-invalidation (Riel, 2021). That is, based on my racial identity, the said cooperating teacher called into question my professional qualifications and background. What is most insidious and difficult about calling out this form of racism is the fact that it is often couched as "honest questions". In other words, the said teacher could easily dismiss this micro-invalidation as her simply asking questions or making small talk. However, as a Black person who has been a victim of microaggressions all throughout my professional career (and judging by her body language and facial gestures), it was not difficult to discern that her questions were rooted in racism and implicit racial bias.

Vignette 2: I just want her to talk the right way!

It was a Thursday evening around 7:30 p.m. I was at home relaxing and watching television when I got a text from a Black female clinical student named Sonia I was supervising at the time. The text read, "Hello Dr. H. I hope you are going well. Can you stop in and see me if you get a chance when you're out at the building next week please? ". It is common practice for me to give my personal contact information to my students, so that they could reach me if any problems, challenges, or questions occur during their clinical and student teaching process. I always try to position myself as an advocate for students and in doing so I also provide opportunities for students to share and discuss any social and emotional challenges they may be working through with their cooperating teachers as well. I immediately texted Sonia back and asked her to let me know if the issue was an emergency. I let her know that I was willing to readjust my Friday schedule to stop in to visit with her. Sonia asked me to stop in at 11:30 a.m. on the following Monday. Sonia was a woman and very bright first generation college student from a middle class background. Being the only Black student in the PDS cohort at the time, I took it upon myself to establish a personal and professional caring relationship that would help her navigate many of the pitfalls, complexities, and nuances of being a Black student in a predominately white context. Up to that point, Sonia had not had any known or explicit challenges working with her cooperating teacher. As a result, I kept wondering to myself whether or not the challenge was internal or external in nature.

The following Monday I arrived at the school as planned. I completed my observation with another PDS student and waited in the Teachers' Lounge until 11:30 a.m. to meet with Sonia. Around 11:27 am, I packed up my things and made my way down to the room where Sonia was assigned. The kindergarten children in Sonia's classroom were on their lunch / recess break and the cooperating teacher was out of the room. I asked Sonia if she wanted to talk in the room or if she wanted to go somewhere else where we could have more privacy. Sonia told me it was okay to talk there because the cooperating teacher was on break as well. I asked Sonia how things were going and what she needed to talk to me about. Sonia revealed to me that she had been experiencing many tensions with her cooperating teacher over the last few weeks or so. She further explained that her cooperating teacher, who was a white woman, kept hyper-correcting her language patterns after each of the lessons she taught. Sonia explained that she felt that the feedback was racist in nature and didn't know how to deal with the situation without experiencing some form of negative retaliation from her cooperating teacher (i.e., negative letter of recommendation, passive aggressive behavior, negative evaluations etc.). Sonia wanted me to give her guidance in handling the situation in a way that would produce the least amount of social and political damage as possible. After discussing possible solutions to this problem for several minutes, I offered to talk to Sonia's cooperating teacher on her behalf. Sonia declined and said she would just ignore everything and continue moving forward, as there were only about five weeks left in the student teaching semester. I told her I respected her decision and to let me know if her position changes. Sonia then escorted me toward the door, as it was almost time for the kindergarten children to return from their break. Suddenly, Sonia's cooperating teacher walked in and greeted us with an awkward stare. I politely said "hello" and smiled and continued to make my way toward the front office to sign out for the day. Within about four hours or so, I received an email from Sonia's cooperating teacher stating that she wanted to talk to me. Sonia's cooperating teacher and I both

agreed to meet for a conference on the following Wednesday morning. We agreed that 8:00 am was the best time to meet, as the children would not be at school during this time.

I showed up at the designated meeting time and met with Sonia's cooperating teacher in the conference room adjacent to the principal's office. Sonia's cooperating teacher opened the meeting by thanking me for taking the time to meet with her. She also explained that she wasn't trying to be "mean or anything" but she had a problem with the way that Sonia was speaking to the children during many of her lessons. Sonia's cooperating teacher also talked about how she felt that it was "wrong" and "unprofessional" for Sonia to talk like that and that she just wanted her to "talk right". It was clear to me that Sonia's cooperating teacher was operating from a deficit and racist view of language in general and Black language in particular. It was also clear to me that I did not have the time nor the space to adequately deal with this issue. Instead, I shifted the conversation to celebrate Sonia's strengths and progress up to that point and encouraged the cooperating teacher to focus less on hyper-correction and more on building a supportive, nurturing, and caring relationship between her and Sonia. The cooperating teacher agreed to set this as an appropriate goal going forward and thanked me for my time as she escorted me to the exit door.

What is evident in this particular vignette is the fact that Black students and other linguistically diverse students are likely to experience various forms of what Baker-Bell (2020) calls linguistic racism. That is, a form of racism that disparages and discriminates against language patterns and variations that are rooted in non-white ways of being and speaking. As a Black preservice teacher who was working in a predominantly white classroom and school, Sonia was criticized and marginalized on the basis of using Black language while teaching. Language patterns are deeply rooted in and connected to one's race, culture, class, age, and region (Smitherman, 1977). Therefore, to critique one's use of language is to commit a form of racialized violence toward that individual (Lee, 2017). In keeping with this line of thought, the cooperating teacher wasn't merely critiquing Sonia's words. Rather, the cooperating teacher was also critiquing and committing violence against Sonia's identity, history, and humanity.

Vignette 3: "I think she would do much better in a high school or college setting"

As an advocate for social justice, I infuse various theories, assignments, and practices related to racial justice and equity into the courses I teach. More specifically, in the literacy methods course I teach (that is required for PDS students to take simultaneously during the fall semester of their PDS experience), I discuss the importance of teaching young children about race and racism. Moreover, we talk about the possibilities of using children's literature to help facilitate these dialogues. PDS students are then required to teach a social studies lesson related to a justice issue such as: racism, classism, sexism, etc.. I can remember when one student in particular, Haley, decided to teach her kindergarten students about the Civil Rights Movement and the history of racism in the United States. She developed a high-quality and developmentally appropriate lesson involving several picture books. After observing the lesson and providing feedback, I had a conversation with Haley's cooperating teacher Mrs. Jackson. Mrs. Jackson let me know during this conference that she didn't think it was "appropriate" for Haley to be teaching kindergarteners about race and racism. Mrs. Jackson assured me her perspective did not have anything to do with her being white or racist. She explained to me that she has a biracial grandson and therefore could not be considered a racist. In addition, Mrs. Jackson explained that she felt young children

shouldn't be exposed to these atrocities so early in life. Mrs. Jackson believed this information could have a potentially detrimental effect on children.

Mrs. Jackson went on to further explain to me that she believed Haley would be better suited to teach in a high school or collegiate classroom than an early childhood classroom. We continued our conversation for a few more minutes and settled on the fact that we both see things differently regarding the topic of race and children. I later spoke with Haley and she admitted to me that she was highly discouraged and disappointed by the feedback she received from Mrs. Jackson regarding her lesson. Haley and I both agreed that this was less about potentially damaging children and more about avoiding issues of race and racism within the early childhood curriculum.

Many early childhood teachers apply a color-blind approach to race and racism in their classrooms (Escayg, 2020). Oftentimes, as was the case with Mrs. Jackson, early childhood teachers argue that avoiding discussing issues of race and racism is a way of preserving the innocence of childhood. Unfortunately, studies (Escayg, 2020; Husband, 2012) suggest that not talking about issues of race and racism can impair children's consciousness of race and racism during the latter part of their lives (Hagerman, 2019).

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine my experiences, as a Black male teacher educator and university supervisor, working in a predominantly white professional development school program. Data from this study yields three important implications for practice. First, as pointed out in the data, I experienced microaggressions as a result of being a person of color working in a predominantly white context. Hence, it is critical for white cooperating teachers to engage in professional development related to implicit racial bias, microaggressions, and diversity and equity issues. While it is common for preservice teachers to experience coursework related to these topics, it is far less common for cooperating teachers who work in predominantly white environments to engage in these types of learning opportunities. Perhaps, universities can work to provide these opportunities for cooperating teachers who are interested in serving in professional development school partnerships.

The second implication from the data relates to providing support for preservice teachers of color who are working in predominantly white schools and classrooms. As mentioned earlier, one of the Black student teachers I supervised reported being criticized and bullied for the way in which she spoke. In an effort to help future student teachers of color, who may find themselves in similar situations, university supervisors and other PDS stakeholders should consider working collaboratively to provide what I referred to as "racialized safe spaces" for students who believe they are being discriminated against on the basis of their race. Indeed, it can be very intimidating and risky for a Black student teacher to attempt to resolve a race-related conflict with his/her cooperating teacher. Therefore, creating a proactive and supportive university space and mechanism where students can share and work toward resolutions can serve as a constructive and productive means of addressing these types of issues.

Finally, the data from this study also suggest the need for teacher educators and university supervisors to work with cooperating teachers to move beyond color blind approaches to race and racism within the early childhood curriculum. It is difficult for student teachers to work towards racial justice when they are paired with cooperating teachers who do not share the same goals and commitments. Perhaps, university faculty members (who are involved in PDS partnerships and

committed to issues of social justice and equity) might work alongside cooperating teachers to diversify and decolonize the early childhood curriculum in ways that are meaningful, contextually specific, and mutually beneficial for all parties involved.

In conclusion, demographers project that the vast majority of the teaching force in the U.S. is likely to remain white and middle class as we journey through the next decade. For this reason, teacher educators and university supervisors must work diligently to develop and implement PDS programs and partnerships that are supportive for both students of color and faculty of color alike. Rather than taking for granted that cooperating teachers will operate in ways that promote inclusion, diversity, and equity, university faculty members, school administrators, and PDS stakeholders must work collaboratively to develop systemic and sustainable ways to disrupt and combat both institutionalized and individualized forms of racial injustice in their respective programs and educational contexts. Furthermore, failure to do so will ultimately lead to additional students and faculty of color being marginalized on the basis of their racial identities.

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