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## Counter-Movements to Trouble Whiteness in Teacher Education at a PWI: A Pedagogical Approach

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# Counter-Movements to Trouble Whiteness in Teacher Education at a PWI

## A Pedagogical Approach

Timberly L. Baker & Joy Howard

### Abstract

Educational research and public narratives decry the urgent need to strengthen the preparation of teachers who work in urban schools. This article offers a critical analysis of the authors' course as a material response to a need to radically reimagine how we prepare teachers, presenting a Critical Race Praxis approach that focuses on the social construction of race. In an attempt to move theory into practice this article describes and analyzes approaches used to counter the whiteness of teaching in a diversity course. To create a picture of what these countermoves might look like in action, the authors share stories from a pilot project. Three pedagogical approaches were conceptualized and implemented: diversity by design, reflective practice and relational learning. The article discusses relevant literature for developing these pedagogical approaches. Then, we provide a snapshot of ourselves as teacher-researchers and motherscholars, and the context of the GHS221 project. Next, we offer our framework for counter-movements against the white racial frame. Finally, we offer lessons learned to scholars and teacher educators.

### Introduction

Educational research and public narratives decry the urgent need to strengthen the preparation of teachers who work in urban schools (Emdin, 2016; Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2013). This paper offers a critical analysis of our GHS221 course as a material response to a need to radically reimagine how

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we prepare teachers. We present our Critical Race Praxis (CRP) (Stovall, 2006; Yamamoto, 1997) approach that focuses on the social construction of race. In an attempt to move theory into practice we describe and analyze approaches that we used to counter the whiteness of teaching in a diversity course. To create a picture of what these countermoves might look like in action, we share stories from our pilot project, GHS221. In GHS221, we taught an introductory teacher education course (Education 221: Diversity and Equity Issues in Education) and located the unit of instruction (about Race) at a local urban characteristic<sup>1</sup> high school. During this unit of study pre-service teachers and high school students (enrolled in an African American Studies course) learned side-by-side; intentionally positioned as both teachers and learners simultaneously. We conceptualized and implemented three specific pedagogical approaches: diversity by design, reflective practice and relational learning.

We enter this article in conversation with others that offer and eloquently demonstrate a shift in the business as usual narratives (Aviles & Davila, 2019; Lester, Anders, Mariner, 2018) and those that address CRP (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dover, 2015). Furthermore, those that identify and work to address oppression (Blaisdell, 2020; Jaime & Rios, 2006). For our contribution we focus specifically on our pedagogical approaches, that foster a critical approach to teaching and learning about race, and how space, the high school where the unit of instruction was offered, is another demonstration of our countermove against the master narrative about teaching about and on race and where it can and does take place.

As we share our pedagogical approaches used to create experiences with pre-service teachers that debunk racial stereotypes, interrupt prejudice and re-frame ideologies of race, we name our learning and limitations as we narrate implementing CRP at a PWI. In our words, CRP moves counter to systemic, institutional, and individual racism through continual action, reflection and re-inventions of strategies that work against power structures and practices which dehumanize people based on race. Building pedagogical approaches while simultaneously implementing, we suspect, is not new to academics who work with(in) K-12 schools. In our observation and experience, scholars often feel pressured to describe non-linear experiences in linear terms. We intentionally break from this tendency and name the fact that we did not fully name these approaches prior to beginning our GHS221 project. Rather, we began our pilot study, GHS221, with the knowledge that we were seeking to trouble the whiteness of teacher education; and to do so, we needed to create new experiences in a new space for our teacher education students, and ourselves.

In what follows, we discuss relevant literature for developing these pedagogical approaches. Then, we provide a snapshot of ourselves as teacher-researchers and motherscholars, and the context of the GHS221 project. Next, we offer our framework for counter-movements against the white racial frame. Finally, we offer lessons learned to scholars and teacher educators.

### Conceptualizing Counter-Movements in Teacher Preparation

Key to our pedagogical approach is the contention that troubling whiteness characterizes the work of building partnerships to meet the educational needs of students of color. We assert that as teacher educators, we must engage with critical praxis and embrace the “generative confusion” (Tanner, 2017) of our students as a part of the process. Further, the normalizing momentum of whiteness has to be troubled through a counter momentum that specifically addresses manifestations of whiteness. As we describe this approach, we acknowledge that troubling whiteness in teacher education through a single introductory class at a PWI is incomplete. However, when whiteness is left unchallenged, it defines teacher education by perpetuating fear, devaluing non-whites, and masking racial bias. Therefore, we see it as a place to begin.

#### *Literature on the Role of Race and Racism in Teacher Education*

It is widely acknowledged that teachers are too often underprepared to teach students of color who are consistently underserved and marginalized in their schools (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Kinloch, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2013). We assert that students of color are capable, valuable, and worthy of teachers who actively work to address prejudice and disarm racist ideologies. As teacher educators, we echo the call for improved practices in preparing future teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach students characterized often through racially coded language that pathologizes and devalues students of color (Emdin, 2016; Love, 2014; Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019).

As we began conceptualizing and planning for our collaborative work, we were particularly interested in pedagogy and practices within courses that challenged the whiteness of teacher education. Blum’s (2012) and Stovall’s (2006) respective work with high school students, employing non-traditional pedagogical and curricular approaches broadened our scope of the possibilities for creating partnership programs within high schools. At the same time, we considered what Matias (2016; 2018) called the emotionality of whiteness in teacher education and what Ohito (2016) named “discomfort as pedagogy” (p. 459). Essential to our understanding of what it means to teach about issues of diversity and equity is an acceptance of the mental and emotional labor for students and instructors in this work. We agree with Matias (2018) who points to the limitations of teaching the “pesky mandatory diversity course while never offering specific courses on race” (p. 10). Nevertheless, we challenged ourselves to reimagine the course in new ways that reject the status quo and unapologetically focus on race and racism in education in meaningful ways that name and reject the hegemony of whiteness as teaching.

As we reflected on our work, we related to Tanner’s (2017) “The Whiteness Project” which involved a group of high school students in a drama class with the

goal to interrupt whiteness. Key to our project, Tanner found that it was important to affirm spaces of confusion as necessary to learning. Tanner (2017) asserted that instructors must “permit the provocation of generative confusion from our students” (p. 15). This concept of generative confusion was helpful in framing our analysis of the GHS221 project.

### ***Theories on the Whiteness of Teaching***

In our review of literature on the whiteness of teaching (Yoon, 2012) it is evident that whiteness must be troubled at all levels including the ways in which we think about, are enculturated into, and trained in schooling. To destabilize the ways that whiteness defines schools and good teaching is no easy task.

We connect with literature that problematizes whiteness as education (Matias, 2018), the whiteness of teaching (Yoon, 2012) and the whiteness of teacher education (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Sleeter, 2017). From this work, we understand whiteness to be inclusive of invisible aspects such as ideologies, attitudes, emotionalities, and actions that are experienced as racism in practice (Matias, 2018; Yoon, 2012). Succinctly, we understand whiteness as a construct that perpetuates power and privileges assigned to white bodies in material ways. In this framework, we attend to the ideologies, attitudes and actions of whiteness that interact to complicate the project of addressing, interrupting and troubling whiteness at a PWI.

We note that teacher educators must be aware of the ways in which whiteness provides the master narrative, in the U.S., for social life. Feagin’s (2013) white racial frame (WRF) is useful in capturing the scope of whiteness that we evoke in this paper. Feagin explains, “The white racial frame includes a broad and persisting set of racial *stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies*, interlinked interpretations and narratives, and visual images. It also includes racialized emotions and racialized reactions to language accents and imbeds inclinations to discriminate” (pg. xi, italics added for emphasis). Feagin’s (2013) work helped us to develop our understanding of how white racial conscientization might happen and how whiteness is perpetuated through everyday realities and choices about the world around us. Borrowing these concepts from Feagin, we aimed to trouble whiteness by debunking racial stereotypes, interrupting prejudice, and reframing ideologies of race.

We drew from Feagin (2013) and Dillard (2012) to conceptualize the significance of collective remembering and forgetting. Feagin (2013) states the collective forgetting “usually seek[s] to suppress or weaken collective memories of societal oppression, and to construct positive and often fictional memories of that history” (p.17). We put forward that collective remembering can be activated in student assignments. Furthermore, our critique of the whiteness of teacher education should not be read as a personal or individual attack. Rather, we level our critique at the institutional and systemic levels that inform how people come to know, interpret and interact with their social world, including schools (see Matias, 2018; Stovall,

2018). It is important to note that this critique is not new. Indeed, whiteness has been problematized for decades by people of color (Du Bois, 1920/2003, 2008; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2014; Matias, 2018; Woodson, 1933). In sum, we view whiteness as informing the ideologies, stereotypes, and prejudices that undergird how teaching is most often framed in teacher education.

Recently, Souto-Manning and Winn (2019) called for teacher educators to work toward justice as an ethical imperative through specific commitments. They emphasized the profound responsibility of teacher educators. We considered their five key commitments in our analysis of the strategies and practices that we implemented:

- (1) Suspending harm as an ethical imperative
- (2) Interrupting teacher education's Eurocentrism and move toward a new epistemology of teacher education
- (3) Centering intersectionally minoritized communities of color
- (4) Reclaiming education's democratic aims by learning from the history of Black schools
- (5) Fostering teacher education as a site for restorative justice

### **Critical Race Praxis**

Fundamental to our pedagogical approach was CRP (see Stovall, 2006; Yamamoto, 1997). While CRP can take the form of community organizing (i.e., Guishard & Tuck, 2014; Kirshner, 2015), pedagogy in informal learning spaces (Baldrige et.al, 2017), curricular planning and vision (Love, 2014) and space-making (i.e. protests, refusals, artistic expression) (Douglas & Peck, 2013.), in this paper we engage CRP in a specific way. We visualize CRP as the iterative work of applying tenets of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) by reflecting upon and revising curriculum as well as implementing pedagogical and curricular changes. In this particular project we centered the tenet of race as a social construction (see Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Furthermore, we understand the status quo of teacher education as a reifying of racist ideologies where whiteness determines the norms of good teaching and learning. To interrupt whiteness and the deficit framing of nonwhite students, we aimed to trouble whiteness to help build the pre-service teacher's capacity to resist racism.

CRP seeks to develop and translate theory into anti-subordination practices and to rethink theory in response to those new practices (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Stovall, 2004; Yamamoto, 1997). Yamamoto's (1997) framework for CRP characterizes our view of the importance of considering the spaces of learning within urban communities. He stated, "It requires exploring the experiences of racial communities and locating theory development and application within the

antisubordination struggles” (p. 830). In other words, CRP informed both how and where we conceptualized the connections between actions, theories and reflections in our introductory education class.

**Application of CRP.** As we walked out our emerging pedagogical approach in the GHS221 project, CRP involved deep-level listening, creative partnering, honoring different levels of engagement and versions of participation. It also necessitated the recognition and articulation that everyone in the room was at some level both teaching and learning.

In our GHS221 project CRP was how we conceptualized our process of preparing to teach the class, by meeting with several educators at the school to build relationships in order to form a lasting partnership with the school. CRP informed the process of planning to partner with the African American studies class at the suggestion of the high school administrators whose goals were to create a pipeline of teachers better prepared to work in schools like GHS. Further, our theories and actions were informed by the high school students themselves before the unit began. For instance, one Black male high school student articulated, “We don’t want ghetto teachers.” As he explained, he meant that students at GHS wanted teachers who have respect for them as learners and their community. In other words, this student echoed what Souto-Manning and Winn (2019) call for as a need to have teachers who do not harm their students.

### **GHS221 in Context**

In this section, we describe ourselves as motherscholars and the ways that this positionality affects the work that we did in GHS221. We use our knowledge of the WRF to work toward disrupting and interrupting that frame. Then, we describe the background and details of the project.

**Situating ourselves in the work.** After teaching multiple sections of our shared course, Education (221), we<sup>2</sup> identified disturbing misconceptions between our pre-service teachers and the K-12 students who they will one day teach (i.e., using terms like “colored,” referring to LatinX people as “illegal”). From a place of tension between our professional apprehensions as junior scholars and motherscholars (Nash et.al., 2017), we asked two overarching questions: *What does a partnership that troubles whiteness look like? And, how does partnering to trouble the whiteness of teaching build capacity in pre-service teachers?* We also discussed: How would I prepare teachers if I knew they were going to teach my children?

As motherscholars we do not divorce our roles as mother to our own children with the role of preparing teachers to teach Black children. Indeed, we have a sober commitment to both the hope and danger of demanding “transformative practices” in order to meet the needs of Black children specifically (Kinloch, 2018, p. 70). Thus, we choose to engage in the struggle to better prepare pre-service

teachers to teach, build community with, and interrupt preconceived perceptions about individuals and communities of color.

I, Timberly Baker, am an African American woman, mother to two African American children (11 and 9). I find my stories to be effective teaching tools; naming for students and sharing my own experiences as one who observes and experiences blatant discrimination, who is marginalized, and who stereotypes are enforced upon.<sup>3</sup> This position as one who has racially discriminatory experiences is always tempered by the necessity, I feel as a constructivist, to assist students in adding to and building their own schemes of knowledge. Aiding students in thinking critically, while also acknowledging the difficulty of unlearning the racialized frame we have been brought up with in this country.

I, Joy Howard, as a white woman with three Black mixed-race (Black/white<sup>4</sup>) sons (5, 8 and 10), consistently analyzed and explored my ideologies and embodiment of whiteness as a co-teacher and co-author from my perspective as a motherscholar. For example, as co-teachers we made decisions about who would best present particular lessons based on the content and lived experiences (i.e., one class was on “whiteness” and we decided I would lead the discussion with dialogue and critical questions from Baker) in ways that would interrogate the whiteness of teaching.

### ***GHS221 Context and Description***

GHS221 took shape as a course redesign where both high school and college students would learn side-by-side in our Diversity and Equity Issues in Education course (Education 221). As we drafted the theoretical and practical foundations of our project, we were tempered by significant questions related to our capacity to move theory into practice. These apprehensions stemmed from our underlying goals for the partnership and our understanding of the dominance of whiteness in how teaching and learning are often defined (Leonardo & Boas, 2013; Yoon, 2012). Nevertheless, our sense of urgency outweighed our fears. Thus, we began conceptualizing and enacting a new opportunity for pre-service teachers in our program.

Together with university and GHS administration, we co-created a pilot partnership experience. University students<sup>5</sup> were enrolled in a special hybrid section of Education 221. The face-to-face aspect of the class was hosted on the high school campus for a three-week unit about race. As instructors, we met with the teacher of the African American studies class, to plan and organize the structure of the unit on race. Surprising to us, she preferred to observe and primarily act as a participant in the unit rather than as a content instructor. She contributed critical feedback for the logistics and shared several counter-stories during class sessions based on her lived experience as an African American woman raised in the 1960's and as a teacher for over 40 years. She chose not to participate in academic writ-

ing, however she served as an enthusiastic thinking partner in our reflection meetings and continues to be a friend and mentor to us both.

### **Pedagogical Approach: Counter Movements to Trouble Whiteness in Teacher Education**

**Counter-movements:** Through GHS221, we attempted to trouble whiteness, specifically, to debunk racial stereotypes, interrupt prejudice and reframe ideologies of race which are characterized in what Feagin (2013) describes as the white racial frame (WRF). We identified three approaches: (1) *Diversity by design* acknowledges both the strength and necessity of diverse ways of knowing and being. This strategy is essential to academic and social learning and personal growth. (2) *Relational learning*, in this context, focuses on situating all (students and instructors) as learners and teachers in formal and informal aspects of the course. (3) *Reflective practice* centered specifically on instructors, and included how we responded to students' needs, planned for decentering whiteness, and mediated power dynamics within the classroom.

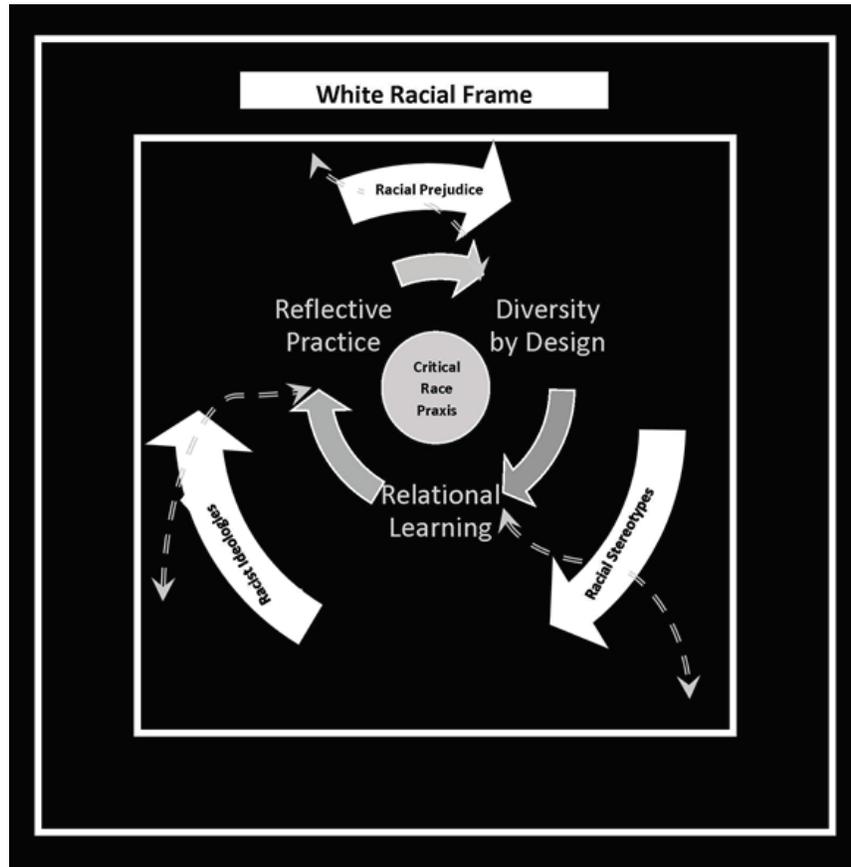
#### **Conceptualizing Our Approach**

Figure 1 represents our conceptualization of troubling whiteness in an introductory education course at a PWI. We represent the WRF as the rectangle that surrounds the visual. We present three manifestations of the WRF (Feagin, 2013) as the arrows that are moving clockwise symbolizing: racial prejudice, racial stereotypes, and ideologies of race. We specifically aim to trouble these three manifestations of the WRF through the use of CRP. To counter the momentum of the WRF in teacher education, we engage CRP with pre-service teachers by employing three methods symbolized by arrows moving counterclockwise. Those are the pedagogical approaches of: diversity by design, relational learning, and reflective practice. We see these approaches as necessary for countering whiteness in the preparation of pre-service teachers. Moreover, as we implement these approaches, we are able to create an interruption in the WRF. That interruption is a break in understanding the world from a singular frame and the beginning of recognizing the flaws in the WRF and the possibility of a different frame. Finally, the arrows moving through the clockwise manifestations of the WRF represent the troubling of whiteness. The arrow going through one of the manifestations of the white racial frame is also pointing toward the interruption in the WRF that is symbolized in this visual by the rectangular frame surrounding the clockwise and counterclockwise arrows.

To illustrate how our pedagogical approach can be applied to practice in teacher education, we discuss how these approaches worked to trouble whiteness within GHS 221.

Figure 1

*Visual of Pedagogical Approach for Troubling Whiteness:  
Counter-Movements to Trouble the White Racial Frame*



### ***Pedagogical Approach in Action: Troubling Whiteness Through GHS221***

In the following section we illustrate the practical applications of our framework using three specific assignments (1) the interview assignment, (2) the poetry activity/student dialogue and (3) the race brown bag. We parenthetically note strategies (e.g., “relational learning”) to demonstrate our pedagogical approaches for the purpose of debunking racial stereotypes, interrupting prejudice, and re-framing ideologies of race.

**Interview assignment:** The use of interviewing others to learn the histories and stories of a place can be impactful for interrupting stereotypes of individuals

and groups of people. Inclusive in the WRF (Feagin, 2013) is the idea of collective memory which denotes that collective memory also includes collective forgetting (Dillard, 2012). Due to the iterative nature of whiteness, this collective work connects and disconnects histories of oppression and "...constructs positive and often fictional memories of that history" (Feagin, 2013, pg. 17). Our efforts to trouble whiteness through the interview assignment included collective memory work and an interruption to the socially constructed deficit narrative assigned to the school based on racial stereotypes.

**Assignment Description:** For several semesters, the Authors had assigned a "Let's Talk about Race" interview. In GHS221, we adapted this assignment to be "The story of Race at GHS." In this assignment high school and college students were organized into small groups (diversity by design) tasked with developing five interview questions that documented racialized experiences at GHS (relational learning) and addressed a historical perspective in order to tell a more collective story of race at GHS. After developing their questions, high school students conducted interviews of their own and assisted college students in securing an interviewee who is a member of the GHS community (i.e., parents, alumni, teachers, community members). Once interviewees were located, each group member completed an interview. Interview findings were compared by all group members and subsequently shared with the class on chart paper. Once each group added their findings to the chart paper (diversity by design), the class was divided into two large groups to have discussions about "the story of race at GHS" (relational learning). During these discussions, high school students made statements like, "*From the outside people see [GHS] as ghetto, they say like be careful at [GHS]; but from the inside we all hang together and we are like a family,*" and "*People think the school has gone downhill since it stopped being a white school over time, but they are wrong, they just stereotype how they think we are supposed to act, but we don't act like that.*" As a class, we identified that the story of GHS from outside the school was full of racial stereotypes, however the collection of interviews served to debunk them (diversity by design).

**Analysis:** Our vision for the assignment was that it would be more than a product, and that learning would take place in the process of collaboration (relational learning and diversity by design). The process of piecing together a more complex picture of the multiple stories of race at GHS that included diverse, class, generational and professional perspectives created opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience productive contemplation of conflicting ideas. Specifically, the process actively interrupted the story of GHS read through a white racial frame. Multiple voices and stories about the GHS community expanded ideologies and interrupted stereotypes among our pre-service teachers. This aspect of the assignment pointed to the value of listening and learning from the experiences and perspectives of communities of color from the beginning of teacher education programs (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019).

Another aspect of the interview assignment was that it addressed a counter-productive trend where pre-service teachers are often positioned as the “knower” in schools where they have little connection to the community. This disruption to the business-as-usual approach to teacher education (Milner et al., 2016) interrupted the trend of positioning (high school) students as a “learner only.” Through reflective practice we strategically shifted the power dynamics intentionally by requiring pre-service teachers and high school students to be interdependent throughout this activity (relational learning). For example, during the interview assignment, high school students often served as brokers for college students (relational learning) to gain access to community members as a means for completing their assignments (diversity by design). In this way, college students had an opportunity to see the social capital that high school students possessed in this context (relational learning).

Ultimately, the interview process and students’ opportunities to share and publish findings collectively contributed to a new narrative of GHS that was counter to stereotypical messages that GHS was not “safe.” Interviews disrupted the common-sense of race (Leonardo, 2014) and pre-service teachers were challenged to discuss and inquire about the various ways that race matters in educational practices and spaces. Moreover, the collaboration on learning the history of race at GHS allowed for counter momentum to the white racial frame that debunked racial stereotypes and reframed ideologies of race about urban school spaces. Instead, knowledge of the community was positioned as a resource in retelling the story of race at GHS, a process that demonstrated diversity by design, reflective practice and relational learning. We view this example as a means to transform assignments that are common in teacher education to acknowledge diverse identities, histories, stories, joys and pains of school communities (Winn, 2018).

**Poetry activity/student dialogue:** Troubling whiteness meant troubling classroom norms driven by Eurocentrism. We embraced movement of both students’ physical bodies and activities that promote dialogue among students.

**Assignment Description:** In the poetry activity, students rotated among stations to examine and discuss various poems about race (i.e., an interracial dating poem,<sup>6</sup> or experiences of multiracial individuals in the U.S.). Students read poems aloud in their groups and then were asked to: (1) Discuss what the poem means or what it is saying about race in America; (2) Find two other people from a different group with a different poem; (3) Give a brief description of the poem, and discuss what it tells readers about race in America. Our aim was to use strategic grouping, various genres, and movement to promote student engagement among all co-learners (diversity by design and relational learning).

**Analysis:** This format located knowledge within the classroom as communal, active, experiential and diverse—a distinct break from viewing knowledge as

singular or static (diversity by design and relational learning). In doing activities such as this, students were able to learn about differing perceptions of race while encouraging them to voice their own understanding of race in America. In this way, we acknowledged the emotionality of whiteness (Matias, 2016; 2018) while pushing students to work through the necessity of discomfort of racial discourse (Ohito, 2016; Tanner, 2017).

As co-teachers, we organized and instructed students to acknowledge the importance of all student voices to be heard and respected. We instructed students that they did not need to seek agreement. This framing decentered whiteness by suggesting that there are multiple stories rather than a singular story of race/racism (diversity by design and relational learning).

Concurrently, it is important to mention that despite our plans for co-equal learning, this was not always the reality. For example, we noticed that college students would position themselves, or were positioned, as the spokespeople for small groups. In response, we immediately reframed the expectations to include a shared spokesperson role that included both a high school and college student reporter in each group (reflective practices). There were tensions within the process-- during a conversation about a poem on interracial dating, one white female high school student relayed her own story. She explained that her parents told her that she was not allowed to date or marry a Black man. A white male pre-service teacher in the group, Kyle,<sup>7</sup> did not accept her story as reality. Instead, Kyle dismissed her truth and reported to the class that their group agreed that interracial dating was “no big deal.” To interrupt this false narrative, the instructors asked the female student to share her experience again with the group. After that, a Black male in the group discussed interracial dating. He spoke about his own preference to date white women. As the discussion continued, Kyle began to hear both high school students’ racialized narratives about dating. By the end of the activity, Kyle was faced with a new context for dating in school that differed from his own schooling experiences in a small white town (relational learning).

The poetry activity created opportunities for generative confusion (Tanner, 2017), interaction amongst group members and movement of bodies throughout the room. This interrupted Eurocentric teaching and learning norms (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019) that tend to be individualistic and lack physical movement. Additionally, an explicit example of our pedagogical approach was demonstrated in the description of Kyle and the two high school students. This moment in the class was significant both for students and for us in our analysis of troubling the WRF. When the personal narrative was expressed (the white girl’s father not wanting her to date a Black person), the WRF was upheld through silencing of racism (Kyle refusal to acknowledge); and it was troubled again (by the retelling of the story and the other boy’s story). This push against an erasure of this story demonstrates the counter-momentum described in our visual.

**Race brown bag:** We created an expectation within the class meetings that we would explicitly talk about race, yet there were still several questions that were left unanswered. In our efforts to trouble the WRF specifically stereotypes and prejudice, stories seemed to have the most impact on students' ideologies about racism.

**Assignment Description:** In one of our final sessions, we invited all students to submit anonymous questions about race. We interspersed high school students, pre-service teachers and instructors (Baker, Howard and the high school teacher) around a circle. Each instructor shared equal "air time" in response to students' anonymous questions.

The norms of the whiteness of teaching were called into question by our different positionalities, teaching styles, and relationships to students and each other (relational learning). To illustrate, during the Race Brown Bag class session, Authors shared an experience in The Denver airport where both race and gender were part of the story. Baker told her story about missing her flight due to a series of events outside of her control, including the inflexibility of the airline's regulations and the TSA's inequitable racial profiling of Black women's hair. She explained that she was offered no assistance from the airline (i.e., no hotel room or food voucher). The story continued that because Howard was awaiting her flight in Denver as well, she was able to speak with customer service on behalf of Baker. At that point, the airline's customer service representative gave Baker a voucher, a hotel room and the flight home the next day. From our different perspectives (diversity by design), we put voice to the racial inequities in everyday life and broke the norm of silence where calling inequities into question is too often dismissed under a guise of colorblindness (reflective practice). Several pre-service teachers referenced this story in conversations and in their final papers as having a profound impact on their understanding of how race works in subtle and normative ways, through their written statements like "racial equity in schools is all of our problem and responsibility."

**Analysis:** In the race brown bag, we were able to articulate that it is possible, indeed essential, for white teachers to learn about bias in the classroom and develop generative instructional approaches and dispositions that promote equity. In this way, the statement that a pre-service teacher made "racial equity in schools is all of our problem and responsibility" aligns to Souto-Manning and Winn's (2019) call for restorative justice by calling for teachers' recognition of their roles in equity and justice in schools. Since we were aware of our racialized and intersectional identities as instructors, our division of instructional leadership and facilitation responsibilities was intentional (reflective practices). It was important that pre-service teachers learned about race and racism in education from and with instructors who were racially similar and different from themselves (reflective practices). Given that 86% of teachers are white and primarily female (Hancock & Warren, 2016), our air time and spatial positioning as racialized teachers was

carefully analyzed (reflective practices). As cross-racial co-teachers, we shared the role of giving instruction, facilitating, storytelling, leading activities and planning assignments and lessons. This co-teaching model was an important break from the norm of the whiteness of teaching where the role of the teacher is dominated by a white female in teacher education courses (Sleeter, 2017; Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019). Based on post-unit surveys, students appreciated the value of this co-teaching experience, specifically in the race brown bag activity. They reported *“I like that all three agreed and disagreed with each other. Everyone truly said what they thought,”* *“They were perfect all together,”* and *“All of the instructors of the course were insightful, challenging and supportive. There was a wonderful and open conversation and the co teaching factor allowed the safety of opinions, perceptions and disagreements”* (relational learning). We recognized through our planning and analysis meetings that our interpersonal communication as co-instructors served as a model for effective cross-racial communication strategies including shared storytelling, respectful disagreements, and active listening strategies (reflective practices). This was vital to model since we were asking students to engage in healthy cross-racial communication as well. In other words, *“We must transform ourselves so we can transform what we do”* (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019, p. 7).

The counter movements to the WRF that were most exemplified by the race brown bag, were: troubling silence when talking about race; learning that racism can be unlearned and that the unlearning takes time and efforts to interrupt racist ideologies—through interrupting one’s own prejudices; and pursuing authentic cross-racial relationships. For many of our pre-service teachers this was the first experience they had with both open discussions about race as well as participating in a cross-racial dialogue about the topic. Furthermore, several pre-service teachers expressed that they had not been in conversation about race, and if they had, it was with people of their same race (i.e., expressing prejudice, racist jokes). The intersectional identities of the instructors, such as age and geographic background contributed to both the collective and nuances of intersectional analysis modeled to pre-service teachers. The high school students, in contrast, had more experience with cross-racial interactions and conversations due to the racial makeup of the school. The interruption to the perceived political correctness of the white racial frame (not talking about race) was troubled.

### Lessons Learned

Through illustrating our pedagogical approaches, we have provided material examples about the possibilities and limitations of engaging CRP to trouble whiteness in an introductory teacher education course. We also engage with other scholars who call into question the spaces we use for teacher preparation. Especially when examining questions of race and our attention to critical pedagogy. In this article we focused on three aspects of the WRF: racial stereotypes, racial prej-

udice, and racist ideologies. We suggest that within this framework teacher educators can implement strategies to trouble the whiteness of teacher preparation. We found three strategies to be particularly effective. *Diversity by design* required students to recognize diversity as a strength through collaboration, communication, and collective story making. In this counterclockwise move we were able to highlight the strength of diverse ways of knowing and being; and the ways that we might imagine troubling racist ideologies about urban spaces and students. *Relational learning* situated everyone in the class as learners and teachers. This movement created an opportunity for students to acknowledge and counter racial prejudice as they saw one another as holders of knowledge with valuable lived experiences. Finally, *reflective practice* utilized strategic cross-racial communication, intentional organization, and responsiveness to power dynamics. This was supported through the co-teaching environment and construction of knowledge for students, it also interrupted racial stereotypes of people.

#### **A Note to Teacher Educators**

Troubling whiteness in an introductory course is an important step toward anti-racist work, however, we are not claiming that this will move students to the point of developing an anti-racist framework. Indeed, we concur with Souto-Manning and Winn (2019) and Sleeter (2017) who call for teacher education to be transformed. It is important to note that troubling whiteness cannot end with a single class, rather a comprehensive approach across the curriculum of teacher education is essential. Nevertheless, in troubling the WRF of teacher preparation through compulsory coursework, particularly at the introductory level, the consistent clockwise motion of whiteness and its manifestations are called into question. Troubling whiteness in teacher education is possible, and we see it as collaborative work. This is a critical lesson that we learned from the partnerships (i.e. local high school, co-teaching) formed during the GHS221 project.

Despite these limitations, what theory cannot do is implement practice. By pairing students and embedding them in the community it interrupted the norm of othering urban students and gave pre-service teachers a sense of responsibility to listen for the multiple stories of the school community. Our attempts to move theory to practice are constrained within the messiness of whiteness and its operation in teacher education. While our particular implementation of this project was imperfect, it was a significant departure from the operation of our institution and a major disruption to the normalizing nature of whiteness. We acknowledge that our partnership can be critiqued as re-centering whiteness due to: the selection of location--majority non-white high school, locally contextualized as a bad school; the pre-service teachers that participated; the selection that we made about assignments and activities; and/or our own positionality as instructors. Our hope is that insights from this project might be taken up in various contexts where teacher educators envision and enact new ways of interrupting the whiteness of

teaching. Furthermore, research and practice would benefit from attempting similar activities to those described here, implementing strategies in different ways (diversity by design, relational learning and reflective practice) and explaining a program-wide commitment to what Souto-Manning and Winn (2019) described for teacher education programs.

In closing, we argue that to better prepare future teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively work in urban classrooms, troubling the WRF of teaching must begin at the beginning of teacher preparation.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> By urban characteristic (Milner, 2012) we mean that this school is widely known in the city as the most ethnically and socioeconomically diverse high school. In this school the non-white population is larger than the white population.

<sup>2</sup> Plural pronouns in this paper (i.e., we, us) represent our shared perspective or experience as co-authors of this paper. Rather than the traditional model of a first and second author, we wish to acknowledge the shared nature of the conceptual and writing process of this work.

<sup>3</sup> I experience these issues as present tense and while past tense may be a better flow of description, I am always aware of how my current body is experienced by me and others

<sup>4</sup> The authors use capital Black and lowercase white, following Dumas (2016) who explains “White is not capitalized in my work because it is nothing but a social construct, and does not describe a group with a common experience or kinship outside of acts of colonization and terror” (13).

<sup>5</sup> The 11 university students are pursuing a minor in secondary education, 10 white; 1 African American, enrolled in a hybrid (80% online, 20% face to face) course. This partnership provided dynamic real-world experiences for students that often have little exposure to more racially diverse populations of students.

<sup>6</sup> Racist Chat: <https://hellopoetry.com/poem/1013406/racist-chat/>

<sup>7</sup> Names of participants are pseudonyms and are only used occasionally to ensure clarity.

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