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The Layered Toll of Racism in Teacher Education on Teacher Educators of Color

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To systematically explore the structural racism that teacher educators of Color endure, this article uses a critical race theory lens to analyze the findings from qualitative questionnaires with 141 Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American teacher educators who work in diverse universities across the United States. We learned that many of the participants in our study were hired to teach race and racism among race-evasive colleagues and predominantly white students that are enabled to protect and leverage their whiteness. As we frame their experiences, we argue that teacher education programs are, in fact, structured for teacher educators of Color to experience racial stress and harm. We end by suggesting steps teacher education programs can take to advance racial justice.

Keywords: *critical race theory, racism, teacher education, teacher educators, teacher educators of Color*

Tamika is a fifth-grade educator in Southern California with a sunny disposition and a positive, encouraging approach to teaching and change. She was also the only Black doctoral student in her program, and the only Black woman (educator or student) in the social foundations class she was team-teaching with three other teacher educators of Color[1] (including one of the authors). Several of the white teacher candidates in class questioned the content of the course syllabus, argued over grades, and would regularly put their feet up on the desk, whispering and laughing throughout the larger class and her section. The final paper was designed for teacher candidates to critically analyze their educational experiences using the course frames and academic scholarship. One white teacher candidate, Mary, wrote in her paper, "this is a useless assignment." Overall, she did not successfully accomplish the assigned task, and she was graded accordingly. The day after papers were returned to teacher candidates, Tamika received an email from Mary with the subject heading, "Angry." Below is an excerpt:

> I don't even know where to begin other than to say you have more than a handful of extremely angry and infuriated students on your hands. Yes, I am one of them. I barely slept last night because I was so angry and trying to figure out what I was going to say and how. I thought about sending you the screenshots from the group message, I thought about writing responses to your comments on my paper and scanning it back to you, I thought about scheduling a meeting. It goes on. Many of us are angry for the same reasons. In the grading for this class, we are being marked down for things that are trivial and trite . . . I firmly believe, as do several others, that this paper was grievously unfairly graded. . . . Several students have mentioned that they are going to write scathing evals [evaluations] for this class. I would have, had I not already done mine before getting this paper back . . . I overheard some will be going to the dean.

When Tamika shared the email with us, she lamented, "All I was trying to do was to get them to dig deeper in their reflection." While Tamika was focused on supporting teacher candidates to strengthen their analysis of educational inequity, Mary leveraged whiteness[2] in her resistance to Tamika's goals. Despite not seriously engaging the course content, she felt secure in disrespectfully communicating that she was "angry" for being marked down on things *she* did not believe were important. Her enactment of whiteness was also intertwined with deficit beliefs about Blackness, as she threatened the job security of her Black woman instructor and felt confident and comfortable questioning her intellectually and professionally. Tamika—hired to teach and assess Mary because of her tremendous expertise as a longtime teacher

CORRECTION (March 2022): Since the original online publication, this article has been updated on p. 6 to more appropriately represent one of the participants. Please see https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221087619 for more details.

and education researcher—was left fearful and stressed that she was going to get in trouble with the dean, that she was going to have terrible teaching evaluations, and thus, would not be hired to teach again in the teacher education program, which was her career goal.

The racial harm Tamika experienced working within a teacher education program is not isolated. Both authors of this article are scholars of Color who work in teacher education with the goals of enacting racial justice. Over the years, we, and many of our colleagues of Color—particularly women, and more frequently, Black women—have experienced resistance as teacher candidates argue over grades, question instructor expertise, and fact check content while it is being taught, even when it is research-based and cited. And these racialized experiences are stress-inducing and have a cumulative impact for teacher educators of Color (Picower & Kohli, 2017).

For decades, scholars have asserted that racism is normalized within the structures of teacher education (Cross, 2005; Marom, 2019; Sleeter, 2001), where today 70% of teacher candidates (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2019), 87% of adjunct instructors, and 91% of tenured/tenure track instructors are white (King & Hampel, 2018). While some teacher education programs have made strides toward meaningfully serving communities of Color, many have remained steeped in what Souto-Manning (2019) describes as, "White ways and systems of knowing which . . . further white interests through the invisibility and/or normalising of systemic racism" (p. 100). Within this racialized context, a very small body of research has drawn attention to teacher educators of Color and their impact in disrupting the pervasive racist curriculum, pedagogy, and ideologies of teacher education programs (Matias, 2013; Navarro et al., 2019; Picower & Kohli, 2017). Additional studies have revealed cases that mirror Tamika's, describing the racism and whiteness teacher educators of Color confront and the emotional cost of this labor (Atwater et al., 2013; Shim, 2018). Most of this work is autoethnographic exploration of classroom dynamics or transformative efforts, highlighting individual contexts, struggles, and accomplishments.

To more systematically explore the structural racism that teacher educators of Color endure across place and context, this article uses a critical race theory (CRT) lens to analyze qualitative questionnaires with 141 Black, Latinx,[3] Indigenous, and Asian American teacher educators who work in diverse universities across the United States and are committed to racial justice, defined through an asset framing of communities of Color and a capacity and will to identify and challenge systemic racism. We study this community because the impacts of racism are often amplified for those explicitly pursuing racial justice. Our research is guided by two questions:

Research Question 1: What patterns exist in the racialized experiences of racial justice-oriented teacher educators of Color across place and context?

Research Question 2: How do these racialized experiences impact teacher educators of Color?

Through our analyses, we learned that many teacher educators of Color in our study were hired to teach race and racism within programs that ignore its relevance and simultaneously center whiteness. As we unpack their experiences, we argue that teacher education programs are, in fact, structured for teacher educators of Color to experience racial stress and harm, and must be accountable for fundamentally changing these structures.

The Centrality of Whiteness in Teacher Education

In a field where most teacher educators and teacher candidates are white and curriculum rarely interrogates oppression because it is structured to privilege white comfort, teacher education has remained steadfast in reproducing a predominantly white teaching force with little sociopolitical analysis and deficit frames of students, families, and communities of Color (Amos, 2010; Gist, 2017; Valencia, 2010).

Critical scholars and practitioners have invested deeply in disrupting this status quo through unpacking white privilege (Hossain, 2015; Ullucci, 2012) and exploring pedagogies of discomfort (Ohito, 2016; Shim, 2018), diversifying the teaching force (Ginsberg et al., 2017; Sleeter et al., 2014), and supporting teacher candidate expertise in culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining teaching (Gay, 2010; Jackson & Boutte, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017). While there is a broader literature on critical teacher educators' efforts to shift teacher education (de los Ríos & Souto-Manning, 2015; Maloney et al., 2019), less attention has been paid specifically to critical teacher educators of Color, who are uniquely impacted by racism within programs and the field.

In the 2005 book, *Beyond the Big House: African American Educators on Teacher Education*, Ladson-Billings broke ground by calling attention to the rampant anti-Black racism[4] endured by powerful African American teacher educators as they fought for dignity, rigor, and relevance in the education of Black communities. In a search of peer-reviewed research over the past 20 years, however, we found just 23 journal articles focused on teacher educators of Color collectively, or Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Asian American teacher educators specifically.[5] While sparse, this literature has revealed both the value of teacher educators of Color in the field and the struggles they endure navigating racially hostile professional contexts. For example, Dixson and Dingus (2007) explored how, as two critical Black women teacher educators, they have been essentialized, silenced, and invisibilized within their institutions. Shim (2018) described the "racial melancholia" she experiences as a

justice-oriented Asian American teacher educator, enduring the resistance of white teacher candidates to her explicit pedagogy of confronting race and racism, something Matias (2013) describes as, "trauma that relentlessly terrorizes my heart, soul, and psyche on a daily basis" (p. 54). In this article, we extend this work, providing qualitative breadth to understand how teacher educators of Color experience racism, arguing that teacher education is systematically structured to perpetuate the racism they endure.

Critical Race Theory

Racism is the creation or maintenance of racial hierarchy supported through institutionalized power (Solórzano et al., 2002). Originally a legal theory, CRT was designed to challenge meritocratic and race-evasive explanations for racial inequity that blamed communities of Color for their subordinate social and economic positions. Also known as colorblindness[6] (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), race-evasiveness specifically describes the neglect and/or silencing of the reality of racism as a mechanism to uphold the racial status quo (Annamma et al., 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Harrison, 1998). This is particularly problematic, CRT scholars argue, because the United States was founded on laws and policies designed to protect whiteness. Harris (1993) argued that whiteness in the United States is treated as, and carries the rights of, property—as it can be experienced, serve as a possession or resource, and maintains the power to exclude. As institutions function to uphold whiteness and simultaneously ignore the ongoing role of race and racism, inequitable structures remain intact. The function of CRT is to expose and disrupt these systems, while centering the knowledge, needs, and visions of communities of Color (Matsuda et al., 1993).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), and Solórzano (1997) brought CRT into the landscape of educational scholarship in the late 1990s to shift from deficit explanations that blamed communities of Color for racial disparities in education toward an acknowledgement of institutional racism as the true root source of racial inequity. Since then, CRT has been applied to teacher education to describe the racialization of teacher candidates of Color (Brown, 2014; Kohli, 2009), analyze racialized institutional policies (Chapman, 2011), and critique disconnects between stated commitments and actual institutional actions for racial justice (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). We build from this legacy to explore the racism teacher educators of Color experience.

Racial Stress

It has been demonstrated that racism negatively impacts the mental and physical health of people of Color (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Repeated exposure can compromise one's psychological and physiological well-being, as well as hinder one's ability to cope with stress. Linking CRT to racial stress, Smith (2004) coined the term "racial battle fatigue" to describe the long-term psychological, physiological, emotional, and behavioral toll of systemic racism. Smith et al. (2006) wrote, "The stress of unavoidable front-line racial battles in historically white spaces leads to people of Color feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically drained" (p. 301). Smith identified impacts of racial stress ranging from social withdrawal, lowered aspirations, and exhaustion to anxiety, hypervigilance, anger, and depression. In this study, we use racial stress as a lens to understand the impacts of structural racism on teacher educators of Color.

CRT and the related concept of racial stress frame our research questions related to the racialized experiences of teacher educators of Color (Research Question 1), and the impacts of those experiences (Research Question 2). In the following sections, we explain how we answer these questions through data collection, analysis, and the presentation of our findings.

Methods

We are two scholars of racism and racial justice who both serve as teacher educators—one a South Asian woman, and the other a Chicano. Our research and practice have focused on the racialized contexts of education, and the racialization of educators of Color (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). For the past 11 years, we have designed and facilitated nationally attended professional development for teachers and teacher educators of Color to strengthen their critical and racial analyses, build community, and develop leadership capacities toward disrupting racism. We entered this study compelled by parallels we were seeing between the race-based experiences of teachers of Color and teacher educators of Color.

To understand teacher educator of Color racialization, in this study, we analyzed questionnaire data collected over 5 years (2016–2021) from teacher educators who applied to attend our professional development. The professional development is designed to explicitly explore racism and racial justice, and the call recruited participants who (1) self-identify as people of Color, (2) serve as teacher educators, and (3) have a commitment to racial justice as defined through an asset framing of communities of Color, an understanding of structural racism, and evidence of engaging in racial justice practices.

All applicants to the professional development were solicited for their participation in the study, and along with demographic questions, the electronic questionnaire included three qualitative prompts for written responses of 250 to 500 words per question: (1) In what ways do you work (or wish you could work) for racial justice in your institution?, (2) Describe the most significant barriers or challenges you are facing as a teacher educator of Color committed to racial justice, (3) Describe your current

opportunities, challenges, interests, and/or needs with taking on racial justice leadership at your institution.

From the self-selected respondents, there were 239 completed questionnaires. After we removed data from teacher educators in nonuniversity settings, and aggregated data from participants who submitted the questionnaire in more than 1 year (11 teacher educators participated 2 years, and three teacher educators participated 3 years), we were left with 141 independent participants. Of this population, 45 were adjunct instructors or lecturers, 63 were tenure-track, 7 were tenured, and 26 did not specify their professional status. Racially, 40% identified as Black or African American, 23% as Latinx, 21% as Asian American, 1% as Indigenous, 1% as Middle Eastern, 11% as multiracial, and 3% as other people of Color.

For each participant, we read their responses from all three questions and over multiple years (if relevant) as a comprehensive set of data. Then, we used an inductive approach (Charmaz, 2006) to identify emergent patterns and themes (Saldaña, 2014) across all participants. Data were first read by the researchers separately to (1) understand the data holistically and (2) generate micro descriptive codes. We then met to discuss and finalize our codes as we calibrated our analysis of the data. Next, using Dedoose software, participant responses were coded by a research assistant who assigned the pregenerated micro descriptive codes, as well as suggested other codes that emerged from their own analysis. The data were then coded for a third time by the researchers in collaborative meetings. We grouped the micro codes into broader themes, using CRT and related conceptual frames to guide sense-making.

Because the data were collected through broad, open-ended questions, findings were guided by our theoretical frame, and were determined by patterns in the descriptions of participant experiences (i.e., "my colleagues avoid talking about race," "white students question my pedagogy") and the language used to describe experiences and/or feelings (i.e., "it is so stressful," "I feel anxious"). As race scholars who enter this research from the standpoint that racism exists and is salient in shaping the experiences of communities of Color, instead of trying to understand *if* teacher educators of Color experience racism, we were concerned with the nuance of *how* they experience it. In this article, we present two themes that had the greatest saliency across the data in answering our research questions, as determined by frequency, depth, and stated impact. Within those themes, we nominated, discussed, and selected through consensus, representative narratives that best demonstrate the complexity and nuance of the thematic patterns, which we present in our findings section.

Results

From the data, we learned that teacher education programs are structured in ways that position teacher educators of Color to endure racial stress and harm. In the next sections, we share data that demonstrate two key mechanisms of this racism: (1) teacher educators of Color are hired to carry race work for the program/institution amongst race-evasive colleagues and (2) programs/institutions enable white teacher candidates to use their whiteness against teacher educators of Color generally, and with frequent targeting of and impact on Black women.

Teacher Educators of Color Carry Race Work Among Race-Evasive Colleagues

Within the open-ended responses, 26 participants[7] expressed that race-evasive colleagues devalued their work, pressured them to engage race less, and/or resisted attempts to decenter whiteness, all while expecting them to carry the race-work of the program—contradictions that evoked tremendous stress.

Tiffany is a Black math teacher educator from the D.C. area who is deeply committed to diversifying the math workforce and cultivating math practices that explore and ameliorate inequity. She explained the ways in which colleagues' race-evasiveness actively works against her efforts.

> In mathematics education, many of my colleagues are convinced that issues of inequity can all be resolved through rigorous content and high expectations, conditions that are necessary but not sufficient. My equity research, whether it is about supporting students of Color or highlighting the resources that teachers of Color bring to their mathematics teaching, is often on the margins. . . . I have had colleagues . . . suggest that attending to race perpetuates racism. On the topic of recruiting teachers of Color, I've been asked by policy leaders, "Who cares if a teacher is green or purple, as long as they do their job?" all while knowing there are no such green or purple people.

Tiffany's entire approach to being a teacher educator is in contradiction to the ideologies and beliefs of her peers. While she centers race, racism, and in/equity in her work, her colleagues purport that discourse on race is irrelevant, unnecessary, and in fact, possibly harmful.

Samara is a Black woman, assistant professor of education at a private California university that is designated a Hispanic Serving Institution. She is one of seven Black tenure-track professors on a faculty of 150. Like Tiffany, she found the race-evasive culture of her peers challenging. She explained, "At times, my colleagues and staff can't see race at all. When they do, they find it difficult to identify acts of racism. When they do identify acts of racism, they are unsure of how to act." This race-evasiveness, or what she calls the "culture of silence," spills over to their expectations of her teaching as well, as she is encouraged to limit her focus on racial justice in the curriculum. Samara commented, "Although my program is 40% Latinx, white students and white logics dominate the classroom. Due to administrative pressure, I am often encouraged to teach topics that white students feel comfortable with, and to prioritize their needs in the class." Although Samara was hired with an understanding of her critical approach to teaching, the broader

race-evasive culture of the program and her peers results in a centering of whiteness; this then impacts how she is expected to teach, stifling her own professional knowledge and expertise.

Anjali is a tenure-track South Asian teacher educator. She was hired for her research lens at the intersections of dis/ability and race. Although she is successful in this work—supported by awards and foundation funding—as the only teacher educator of Color in the Special Education department at her institution, she feels like she is not only fighting against race-evasiveness in her discipline but also in her colleagues.

> Being the "only" has been incredibly tough. While I am okay with building a community around me, special education as a field is so challenging—the heavy emphasis on whiteness, behaviorism, and positivism means that I am constantly trying to undo that which is problematic. The toughest part is that while actively trying to undo these problematic practices, I am met with lots of resistance from colleagues in my department.

In addition to the ways her colleagues resist her attempts to disrupt whiteness, she is also devalued and overburdened in supporting teacher candidates of Color. Anjali explains,

> I feel like when I try to advocate for my BIPOC students, I am seen as less serious. As a faculty member, I am also charged with being the go-to person to mentor youth of color. While I am happy to serve this role within the Special Education department, I am also very aware of the fact that my white colleagues are not given these kinds of service commitments.

Ironically, not only is Anjali positioned to do race-focused work and tasked with it when no-one else is, she is also taken less seriously for doing so.

Adrian is a multiracial teacher educator of Secondary Education in the Pacific Northwest. Like Anjali, they too are positioned to do race-focused or diversity work, yet they feel pressure to always and only participate in this labor. Adrian shared,

> I think sometimes my colleagues perceive me as a diversity hire and hold simultaneous expectations that I should always (only) take part in diversity initiatives in our college, and that I am only in my position because of my having been hired through diversity hiring initiatives.

Working in a predominantly white environment, it was implied that Adrian was hired only because of their positionality as a nonbinary person of Color and thus should take on all and only diversity work. As we see here, there are boundaries drawn around the work teacher educators of Color can, should, and are tasked to do. This work tends to service the needs of their white colleagues—who often want race discourse silenced to manage their comfort and fragility *and* also request help thinking about race/racism because the context demands it.

Catherine is an Asian American teacher educator working in an explicitly social justice program in California. Speaking specifically of the rising interest in antiracist pedagogy in the summer of 2020, after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Tayler, Ahmaud Arbery, and many other Black people, she exposes the multiple and contradictory demands on her labor.

> The most significant barrier I have been facing as a BIPOC teacher educator this year has been navigating relationships with white teacher educators and supporting (or feeling like I need to support) them through their white fragility. At times I wonder if the uprisings over the summer, while increasing some white folks' awareness of racial injustice, have resulted in increased labor for Black, Indigenous, and people of Color. . . . Last week I met separately with two white colleagues who were unsure about how best to support our students. I also had correspondence with another white educator who is unsure how to repair harm she caused during a class meeting back in October. We are all exhausted these days and it surprises me that my white colleagues expect so much support from me.

On top of the stress of teaching during a global pandemic, and amid such flagrant acts of racial violence, Catherine felt pressure to support her white colleagues through their own lack of knowledge and struggles with inadequacy to address race and racial in/justice.

Luciana, a tenured Xicana teacher educator from a teaching institution in Northern California, extends Catherine's analysis and explains the impacts of fighting against racism in teacher education.

> As a self-identified Xicana I have to survive and navigate within an institution that was not intended for my existence. To that end, the daily microaggressions from students, white colleagues, and administration can take a mental/physical/spiritual toll. Often, it comes at you by way of your work being questioned, how you engage with students being questioned, how you present yourself at meetings being questioned, how you call out all of the [above] being questioned, and the list can keep going. This impacts your sustainability because at times you feel like you have to numb yourself just to get through it.

Racism is deeply embedded in the structures of teacher education programs, yet, programs obscure their culpability in maintaining and perpetuating racial harm. The participants in our study revealed time and again that justice-oriented teacher educators of Color are hired into programs to serve a need—to carry race-related labor amongst colleagues who are race-evasive. Within these contexts, teacher educators of Color are constrained to this work, demeaned and deprofessionalized by their commitment to it, and are subjected to supporting the growth and comfort of white colleagues, all while fighting against racism and for equity and justice for communities of Color. This system takes its toll on teacher educators of Color. These findings lead us to argue that many teacher education programs are structured—through systems, policies, practices, and personnel—in ways that subject teacher educators of Color to racial stress and harm.

White Teacher Candidates Are Enabled to Use Their Whiteness Against Teacher Educators of Color

The majority of teacher educators of Color in our study work in programs that reflect the national averages, with an overwhelming majority of white colleagues and program leaders. As we saw in the previous section, many articulated that they were alone in their efforts to infuse racial analyses within the program curriculum, and often they were hired specifically to address these gaps. Using CRT to extend analysis on the institutional embeddedness of racism in teacher education, in this section, we further demonstrate how programs are structured for teacher educators of Color to endure racial stress and harm at the hands of white teacher candidates. Specifically, we argue that programs position white teacher candidates to use their whiteness as property—allowing them to rely on institutional mechanisms to preserve, leverage, and benefit from whiteness—at the expense of teacher educators of Color.

Through the open-ended questions of this study, 37 teacher educators of Color[8] shared that white teacher candidates asserted power to harm them in multiple ways, by questioning their competence, framing their pedagogy as a political agenda, and using course evaluations to admonish them. In analyzing the patterns of their experiences, we argue that teacher education programs position teacher educators of Color to experience racial stress and harm when white teacher candidates are enabled to employ institutional mechanisms such as evaluations and grievances to preserve their whiteness.

In teacher education, like within most higher educational contexts, a great deal of a professor's or lecturer's job assessment is based on student evaluations. When programs readily admit teacher candidates who have deficit beliefs about communities of Color and leave the heavy lift of challenging those deficit beliefs to the few or only teacher educators of Color, as the participants reveal, these educators are positioned to experience white resistance that is often aggressive, retaliatory, and institutionally condoned (including by faculty and administrators). In the face of this racialized retaliation for teaching about racism, in/equity, and in/justice, teacher educators of Color are additionally left worrying about and even losing job security with little acknowledgement or support from the institution.

One participant, Eric, is a queer Indigenous and Asian American teacher educator from the Midwest who takes a critical race feminist approach to his teaching. He conveyed the resistance he faced for teaching about racial equity in a social foundations course, a typically required course in teacher education that often outlines social and racial in/equities in schools (Butin, 2014).

> In the courses I teach on the social and philosophical foundations of education, there are many students (predominately white) who resist and express disdain for the work of racial equity and social justice I espouse . . . I remember the multiple occasions white teacher candidates told me I should consider my own biases that contributed to me being a reverse racist and a bitter and ignorant instructor whose critical theories were irrelevant. I have also been reported numerous times for "politicizing education and diversity."

Although hired to teach a social and philosophical foundations class, as a teacher educator of Color in a predominantly white program, Eric experienced teacher candidates challenging his content knowledge and pedagogy and complaining to his college leadership for teaching about racial equity and social justice.

Rosa is a tenure-track Latina teacher educator from Texas in a program where half the teacher candidates and two thirds of the faculty identify as people of Color. Even in this minority serving context, however, she experiences resistance from white teacher candidates when teaching about issues of race in/equity and in/justice. Rosa explained that she is undermined by white teacher candidates who disregard her professional expertise of well-researched systemic inequalities as they argue that she is just sharing her opinions or personal beliefs. She articulated that,

> These [white] students tend to maneuver the conversation in ways to interpret or rationalize the concepts for themselves and others. I find myself having to defend myself as a person of Color that these views aren't just my personal views, or that I'm not trying to insert my personal beliefs on others.

Both Rosa and Eric, and many others in the study, were hired to infuse issues of race, in/equity and in/justice into the curriculum. However, because of the racial dynamics of teaching white teacher candidates as teacher educators of Color, and because their programs are structured for them to be solely responsible for critical content, teacher educators of Color are often accused of being "ignorant," "biased," and purporting "personal views" rather than disciplinary expertise.

The racialized deprofessionalization that is enacted through these tactics leaves teacher educators of Color experiencing extreme racial stress. In our study, teacher educators of Color were impacted by both the fear and reality of white teacher candidates enacting resistance and harm. For example, Amy is a third-generation Japanese American, born and raised in Hawai'i, who serves as a full-time instructor in a teacher education program. She was hired because of her expertise in distance education and infusing place-based approaches and land education into STEM. She shared,

> As a limited-term faculty member most recently hired to my department, my position is at highest risk of being cut given the budget concerns brought by the pandemic. I understand how both of these [issues] limit the risks I am willing to take in class. Although BIPOC students are the majority, I am cautious of our white students, particularly those who express a right to comfort. Racial

> justice work assumes discomfort in order to grow, but I am always questioning how hard to push discomfort when it may possibly affect my employment.

We found that teacher educators of Color who teach about race have to weigh decisions about the curriculum and pedagogy they enact with the impacts these choices can have on their job security. In a response to white comfort and the worry that disrupting it may have on her job stability, Amy feels compelled to compromise key tenets of her pedagogy. She knows that it requires "discomfort in order to grow" around issues of race and in/equity, but she does not feel safe to push white teacher candidates toward discomfort because of how they may leverage their whiteness to jeopardize her employment. A South Asian teacher educator from New Jersey, Nidhi echoed Amy's burden as she wrestled with the "emotional tax" of supporting white teacher candidates in their learning about race, arguing, "There is a noted need to work doubly as hard and not appear to be aggressive when helping students to rectify misconceptions around race, pedagogy and schools."

While white teacher candidate resistance was assaultive to a diverse range of teacher educators of Color, the data revealed a heightened pattern of disdain, disrespect, and disregard for the intelligence and humanity of Black women working in teacher education programs. Serena is a Black tenured professor of multicultural education in a Northeastern city that is almost half people of Color and, more specifically, over 20% Black. Most of her teacher candidates, however, are white women who come from rural areas in the state and have experienced little racial or ethnic diversity. She explained that many have never been challenged to think about race, and most have never had a Black woman educator throughout their entire educational career prior to taking her class. As a result, Serena is constantly subjected to racist stereotypes and expectations, and a resistance that disregards her expertise and intelligence. She explained,

> When I do not fulfill the self-sacrificing motherly or mammy expectation and spend time doing and expecting serious work in the classroom, my students have interpreted this approach stereotypically and have labeled me as angry or as having an attitude. For example [in my teaching evaluations they would say things like], "Everything was her way or the highway." "She was very emotional." "I felt the class was a waste of time." "You need to keep your emotions out." "I'm upset my time was wasted." "I was hoping for a lot more from someone with a doctorate." I find that many of these young white women are wrestling with their own internalized gender oppression and in similar fashion to white male students, utilize student evaluations to question my competency as a scholar and then to reassert their racial and gender dominance as white women.

As Serena articulates, the teacher candidates are confident in their perceived right and authority to assert their racial and gender dominance as white women over their Black woman professor. They embody anti-Black racism as they attack Serena's credentials as a way to resist and challenge her teaching of content that decenters whiteness. Yet, as we unpack this racism through a CRT lens, we cannot stop at the teacher candidates given that the program facilitates the conditions that cause racial harm for Serena.

First, as legacies of institutional racism have perpetuated low numbers of Black educators and their pushout, the teacher candidates in Serena's class have not had a Black teacher before. The program perpetuates this pattern by continuing to train primarily white and very few Black teacher candidates to be future educators. Next, the program has not prepared these predominantly white teacher candidates to confront their stereotypes and belief systems about Blackness before they come into Serena's class. And last, being minoritized racially *and* ideologically leaves Serena open to the unchallenged anti-Black ideologies of teacher candidates. This results in assaults on her intelligence, capability as an instructor, and the value of her content and pedagogy, affirmed through institutional mechanisms such as course evaluations.

Serena continued, describing that the racialized resistance in her teaching evaluations exists in a context that supports these uninformed challenges to her capabilities, and this leaves her feeling anxious. "Remarks like these, questioning my experience and credentials, have only added to my anxiety and concern for my professional persona in an environment where I already perceive others doubt my intelligence and ability to occupy space in the academy." So, in addition to experiencing harm from her teacher candidates, something that could have been mitigated by a sustained and strategic approach to racial literacy where the structures, policies, and practices within her program proactively and sustainably address racism, Serena is also left worrying and fearing that she might lose her job. The program leadership and her colleagues have not only left her vulnerable to racism, they have also created race-evasive conditions where her experiences with racism are read as a sign of inefficacy.

Lynn was a veteran Black high school science educator from New York City who had recently started a doctoral program and was teaching in the credential program at the same institution. Similar to Serena, her credentials and role as a professor were repeatedly questioned. She conveyed,

> I have been reported to the chair of the department without a student having come to speak to me first, because they felt they deserved better grades. I have had students repeatedly go to my [white] co-teacher [when I am the lead instructor], to "set things right" despite being told multiple times that I am the course instructor.

Even after years as a successful educator, Lynn's white teacher candidates do not view her as a competent instructor. And as these students leverage their whiteness to challenge her, she describes feelings of "panic" and "anxiety."

Unfortunately, what Serena, Lynn, and Tamika expressed was not an anomaly. Sixteen Black participants (14 of whom were women) shared very similar attacks against not

just the content and pedagogy of their courses but also against their mere presence as course instructors. white teacher candidates question their professional abilities in class, demean their competence through their course evaluations, and complain to program leadership with the intent of threatening their jobs, reporting them "intimidating." Coupled with programs' race-evasive approach to understanding white student resistance and their commitment to institutional structures that perpetuate racism, teacher education programs position teacher educators of Color, and Black women in particular, to experience incredible racial stress and harm. And the pervasiveness across institutions and regions is evidence of the embeddedness of anti-Black racism in teacher education.

Discussion and Recommendations

Race-evasiveness is a mechanism of racism that emerged at the end of Jim Crow Laws that "explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 2). By minimizing the incidence of racism and calling for equity in abstract terms, the perpetrators of race-evasiveness neglect legacies and current structures of institutional oppression, thus maintaining the racial status quo. Teacher education has notoriously engaged in race-evasiveness through admissions, pedagogy, and curriculum (Gorski, 2009; Kohli et al., 2021). The result has been the unwavering production of an overwhelmingly white teaching force with deficit frames of students of Color (Valencia, 2010). Because it obscures the realities of race and racism, this race-evasive approach to teacher education results in the harm of teacher candidates of Color (Amos, 2010; Kohli, 2021) and, as we found, teacher educators of Color.

The data highlighted in this article is from a pool of 141 teacher educators of Color from across the country. Many teach in major universities, including some of the premier state institutions where teacher education programs play a significant role in preparing teachers for their regions. It is not uncommon for faculty of Color, particularly women, to take on additional labor mentoring teacher candidates of Color or facilitating race-focused work that white faculty are not asked to do (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). These roles have been shown to compromise research productivity and other markers of success in academia (Kelly et al., 2017). The findings in our study extend this work and reveal that justice-oriented teacher educators of Color are often hired to take on race-work in their programs, typically as the only ones engaged in that work. Program structures and leadership allow for colleagues to understand this labor as peripheral, and thus, justice-oriented teacher educators of Color are often demeaned for this focus and are urged to bend their racial justice efforts to ensure white comfort.

This reality is leveraged by white teacher candidates who invoke the property rights of whiteness, weaponizing student evaluations and reporting faculty of Color to chairs and deans to resist and retaliate against their expertise in analyzing racism. There is a great deal of research that outlines the resistance of white teacher candidates to confronting issues of racism in teacher education (Gonsalves, 2008; Staples, 2010; Wilson & Kumar, 2017). Less research has examined the impact of white teacher candidate resistance on teacher educators of Color. Matias (2013), explores this directly as she writes a counterstory about the trauma for teacher educators of Color undertaking "the grave task of training self-affirmed colorblind white teacher candidates at the expense of our pain" (pp. 54–55). The teachers in our study echo Matias' pain, revealing white teacher candidate resistance that is both condoned and structured by teacher education as programs disregard the expertise of teacher educators of Color, impose limits on their roles, and allow for significant and ongoing threats to their professional stability.

In addition to general forms of racism, it has been noted that many teacher education programs embody and condone deficit framings of Black students and communities (Cross, 2005; Kohli, 2009), and systematically neglect the wisdom of Black educators in the teaching of Black and other students of Color (McKinney de Royston, 2020; Muhammad, 2020). Graves (2017) writes about waking up one morning with Bell's Palsy, losing the function of half of his face for 6 weeks. He attributed his weakened immune system to the extreme stress of teaching about racism in a predominantly white women's college as a Black man, where he was continuously preoccupied with challenging students' understanding without evoking resistance. Evans-Winters and Twyman Hoff (2011), demonstrate how white preservice teachers use teaching evaluations to devalue and demean their Black teacher educators as a form of resistance to "learning about and deconstructing systems of power" (p. 461). In our study, we saw similar themes, as whiteness as property intertwined with forms of anti-Black racism in the structures of teacher education programs, and Black women teacher educators were impacted by both the fear and reality of white teacher candidates enacting resistance and harm.

As CRT guided our sense-making of the data, we pinpoint the need for reform within institutional structures. Teacher education programs must be tasked to disrupt harmful cycles of white dominance, and building on our analysis of the experiences of teacher educators of Color, we offer four possible steps teacher education programs should institutionalize to advance racial justice:

1. *Challenge race-evasiveness:* This study reiterated the pervasive race-evasive culture that exists across U.S. based teacher education programs, and its impact on teacher educators of Color. To address this, programs should ensure that all teacher education faculty share the responsibility of reflecting on

and challenging racism, and for supporting students of Color. This begins by requiring faculty and program leadership to develop the racial literacy—the ability and will to identify and disrupt structural racism (Guinier, 2004)—needed to understand the historical and contemporary experiences and strengths of communities, teacher candidates and faculty of Color. Teacher educators of Color should be able to choose whether to support those professional development efforts; and if they do, they should be compensated for their expertise and labor. Racial literacy should also be a core competency for new faculty hires, evaluated through rubrics that gauge understandings of structural racism and a commitment to challenging it. In addition, racial literacy growth should be part of the evaluative process for all staff, faculty, and administrators in teacher education.

2. *Require a base level of racial literacy for admission of teacher candidates:* A key source of harm teacher educators of Color revealed in the study was teacher candidates who have deficit frames and little understanding of structural racism. Teacher education programs must assess racial literacy and require an asset framing of students, families and communities of Color as a core criterion for admissions. Those who do not meet the minimal racial literacy requirements can be provided avenues to enroll in coursework they can complete to support their growth in these areas before applying to teacher education programs.
3. *Educate white teacher candidates on how whiteness operates:* As exemplified in the case of Serena, white teacher candidates' anti-Black frames and enactment of whiteness are severely harmful to the well-being of Black teacher educators. In their induction to the program (before white teacher candidates take courses with teacher educators of Color), teacher education programs should expose them to concepts such as whiteness and white fragility and teach them how to recognize and disrupt these ideologies. Intertwined with racial literacy, the importance of this knowledge should be messaged and affirmed institutionally. This should not be the responsibility of teacher educators of Color.
4. *Expect and prepare to address racism in teacher education programs:* As both the literature and the findings of this study reveal, racism is endemic to teacher education and these recommendations, even when enacted, will not eliminate all manifestations of racism from programs. A program with a healthy racial climate (Kohli et al., 2021) should develop systems to: (1) confront racism and have those who engage in racist behaviors, policies, or practices address its impact and (2) leverage concrete processes and resources to support teacher educators of Color when they face racism from colleagues, students, or structurally.

More research is needed to fully unpack the ways in which structural racism is perpetuated in teacher education, particularly in how it impacts teacher educators of Color. Additionally, the teacher educators of Color who participated in this study sought much more in their work than to confront racism in teacher education. As one Indigenous teacher educator suggested, "I have beautiful visions of education that I want to bring to fruition." When teacher education programs take active steps to evaluate, address, and disrupt racism within their policies and practices, teacher educators of Color will be able to redirect energy away from fighting race-evasive colleagues and students toward materializing those "beautiful visions."

Notes

1. We acknowledge that labels for race, ethnicity, and other social groupings are socially constructed, politically influenced, and fluid, and none perfectly capture the unique positionalities and experiences of people. Throughout the article, when we refer to an individual racial group, we use the specific term (i.e., Black, Asian American, Indigenous), When we reference multiracial groups of racially minoritized people in the aggregate, we use the term "of Color," and understand its history, current-day utility, as well as its flaws and limitations. We also acknowledge the value of the term Black, Indigenous, and people of Color (BIPOC) and include it as it is used in the data. Additionally, we capitalize "Color" and the terms Black and Indigenous, just as terms like Asian American, African American, and Latinx are capitalized, to honor the dignity and identities of racialized people in formal ways. However, "white" appears lowercased. It is only capitalized if it appears at the beginning of a sentence or if we are citing a direct quote. While we recognize the humanity of all people and acknowledge white as a racial category, as scholars of critical race theory, we also acknowledge the historical roots of whiteness, designed as a category of power and exclusion and leveraged through racial violence. Today, those legacies live on in both overt and implicit ways, systemically and interpersonally. In 1991, Gotanda built from Crenshaw (1988) as he wrote "To the extent that Black 'summarizes' relations of racial subordination, white 'summarizes' racial domination. As a term describing racial domination, 'white' is better left in lower case, rather than privileged with a capital letter. 'Black,' on the other hand, has deep political and social meaning as a liberating term, and, therefore, deserves capitalization" (p. 4). To avoid affirmation to white power and racial domination, we extend the resistance of Crenshaw, Gotanda, and many other critical race scholars as we maintain the term in lowercase (Drake & Oglesby, 2020; Kohli, 2021; Kohli et al., 2021; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

2. The construct of whiteness is central in the findings of this article. We analyze whiteness as it is embodied in teacher education in multiple ways, building on Harris's (1993) analysis of "whiteness as property" and subsequent analyses of concepts like white fragility and white comfort (DiAngelo, 2018).

3. We use the term *Latinx* to disrupt gender binaries and strive for inclusivity and visibility of gender nonconforming people. We want to acknowledge that women-led organizing to challenge the longstanding labels of *Chicano* and *Latino* to *Chicana/o* and *Latina/o* is the foundation on which new generations of Latinx activists have challenged the gender binary of the *a/o* toward the *x*. We use the term *Latinx*, not to erase the powerful contributions of women, but instead to stand with those who have built on the legacies of Chicanas and Latinas to strive for intersectional visibility and justice.

4. Intertwined with white power, anti-Black racism exists through the dehumanization and disenfranchisement of people racialized as Black (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & Ross, 2016).

5. Searches were conducted using ERIC and Academic Search Complete with search terms that included "teacher educators of Color," "BIPOC teacher educator," and "teacher educator" alongside the terms "Black," "African American," "Indigenous," "Native," "Latina/o," "Latino," "Asian," and "Asian American."

6. We build from and honor the pivotal work of Bonilla-Silva (2006) to describe an avoidance of race or racism discourse as a mechanism that maintains racism. Critical disability scholars have argued that the use of the term "colorblind" is ableist (see Annamma et al., 2017). Aligned with their use of color-evasive, we use the term "race-evasive" (Harrison, 1998) as a more precise way to name this phenomenon.

7. The 26 participants included five who were adjunct professors or lecturers, 14 who were tenure-track faculty, one tenured professor, and six who did not specify.

8. The 37 participants included 13 who identified as adjunct professors or lecturers, 16 who were tenure-track faculty, three tenured professors, and five who did not specify.

Open Practices

The data and analysis files for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.3886/E158701V1.

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