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# Linguistic Identities and Experiences of Generation 1.5 Teacher Candidates: Race Matters

Farahnaz Faez

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*This article recounts the experiences of six Generation 1.5 teacher candidates (TCs) as they grapple with the significance of their racial identity in asserting their native-English-speaking status. A one-year qualitative case study, it draws on critical race theory and positioning theory to elucidate how native-English-speaking status is linked to levels of language proficiency and country of birth as well as to individuals' race. Whereas Generation 1.5 non-white teacher candidates' discourses reveal instances of marginalization and racism, discourses of white Generation 1.5 teacher candidates express privilege and acceptance.*

*Cet article raconte les expériences de six stagiaires de la génération 1,5 aux prises avec la signification de leur identité raciale dans l'expression de leur statut de locuteur natif d'anglais. Cette étude de cas qualitative d'une durée d'un an puise dans la théorie critique sur les races et dans la théorie du positionnement pour jeter de la lumière sur le lien entre le statut de locuteur natif d'anglais et la compétence langagière, le pays d'origine et la race. Alors que les discours des stagiaires de la génération 1,5 de couleur évoquent la marginalisation et le racisme, ceux des stagiaires blancs expriment le privilège et l'acceptation.*

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The social turn in applied linguistics (Block, 2003) has led researchers to move beyond psychometric analysis of language development and focus their attention on emic perspectives and examine the roles of race, ethnicity, gender, and other factors that contribute to the construction of individual identity. (*Emic* is a term used in qualitative research to refer to the point of view of the participant who is an insider to the culture and context under study. I use this term contrast to the term *etic*, which refers to the viewpoint of the researcher who is an outsider to the culture and context being studied.) Critics of mainstream cognitive-oriented approaches to the study of language education (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 1999, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 2001) focus scholarly attention on the unequal relations of power in society and the significance of critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis. Following this trend, this study examines how Generation 1.5 teacher candidates (TCs) conceptualize their linguistic identities and experiences, with a central focus on race, in a bachelor of education (BEd) program in one of Canada's multicultural cities. In a world where native-speaking is equated to a superior quality of English and in turn superior

teaching skills (McFarland, 2005), understanding the experiences of Generation 1.5 TCs and their conceptualizations of native and nonnativeness is significant. This study signals race as a significant marker of linguistic identity and indicates prevalence of marginalization, discrimination, and social injustice toward nonwhite Generation 1.5 TCs.

I first evaluate key issues in the literature on Generation 1.5 and the intersection of linguistic identity and race. Next I define the theoretical framework used to analyze the data. I then present data from a one-year qualitative case study that examined the linguistic identities of 25 teacher candidates from diverse linguistic backgrounds and their experiences in a teacher education program. For the purposes of this article, the focus is on six of the 25 Generation 1.5 TCs. The analysis focuses on how race is significant in the TCs' perceptions of their linguistic identity, experiences, and formation of their professional identity. Further, it questions the power relationships (Weiss & Wodak, 2003) that determine who is native, who is privileged, and how experiences shape identity and vice versa. Finally, the implications of the findings for policy and practice in English-language teaching (ELT) and teacher education programs across Canada are presented.

### **Generation 1.5: Racial and Linguistic Identity**

Generation 1.5 is a label used for persons who are born outside Canada and the United States or those who are born to immigrant parents in these countries and have received most of their secondary and/or elementary education there. As evident through the definition, the term *Generation 1.5* refers to a broad range of people with varying experiences and backgrounds. The life experiences of those who have immigrated to an English-speaking country differ from those who are born to immigrant families in such countries. In addition, age of arrival is a significant factor that contributes to the experiences of immigrant Generation 1.5 people because of their life stage at the time of immigration (preschool, primary school, middle school, or high school). However, the literature tends to express these varied life-stage experiences through one common term, Generation 1.5. Consequently, a one-size-fits-all approach is adopted to explain their experiences and to support them in their educational endeavors. This approach is characterized in the definition provided for English-language learners (ELLs) by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME). According to its definition (OME, 2008), ELLs include students recently arrived from other countries as well as students born to immigrant families, francophone parents, and Aboriginal parents whose first language is not English. The OME suggests that these students require "focussed educational supports" (p. 8). The term Generation 1.5 is adequate as a factual descriptor to refer to a group of students whose linguistic and cultural experiences differ from those of people born and raised in one-language community. However, the term becomes problematic when it serves to *Other* certain students due to their background.

Generation 1.5s are Othered by virtue of their background and lack of belonging to neither first- nor second-generation immigrants. Most Generation 1.5 people are nonwhite, so a significant factor that contributes to Othering them is their racial background. Pennycook (1998) criticizes the problematic ways that contemporary white culture positions cultural Others, creating the *Self* and *Other* or *Us* and *Them* categories. Unlike genetic characteristics, race is not a biological construct, but a socially constructed phenomenon characterized by features such as skin color, eye shape, facial features, and so forth (Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009). This construction normalizes the *Self/Us* and serves to alienate the *Other/Them*. The *Us*, in a privileged position of power, create the norms of language, culture, and behavior, whereas the *Them*, recipients of these norms, speak and act differently, and so feel degraded. Blackledge (2002), in responding to diversity, notes the hegemony of the majority and the marginalization that may extend to exclusion of the racial minority.

Benesch (2008) argues that three discourses of partiality are associated with the term Generation 1.5: (a) discourse of demographic partiality surrounding their background, which is due to their in-between immigration status, positioned as nonnative (*Them*) and progressing toward becoming native (*Us*); (b) linguistic partiality, which is a result of viewing their first- and second-language ability as partial; and (c) academic partiality, meaning that they are “still learners of English” (Goen et al., 2002) and thus not ready for college work. The claims about the potential limitations of Generation 1.5 individuals are inconsistent. Whereas Moore and Christiansen (2005) argue that Generation 1.5 students lack sufficient proficiency in “reading, speaking, writing and understanding English” (p. 17) for college work, Harklau (2003) claims that their speaking skills are on par with those of their native-speaking counterparts, but they have difficulty with academic language. These inconsistent and unjustified viewpoints may result in problematic classifications and deficit-oriented approaches to Generation 1.5 students’ education (Talmy, 2001), for positioning them as lacking sufficient linguistic proficiency in English and/or their mother tongue ignores their multilingual capabilities.

Strong arguments have been made that underlying the term Generation 1.5 is a monolingual/monocultural ideology that has its roots in US history and colonization (Benesch, 2008; Ricento, 1998; Wiley, 2000). Language, culture, ethnicity, and race are intertwined in complex ways. Shuck (2006) explains that dominant discursive processes draw on monolingual ideologies to construct nativeness and whiteness in English as unmarked and normal and consequently position nonnative-speakers as marked and alien. The native-speaker construct has been problematized in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) through the work of several scholars (Amin, 1997, 1999; Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, 2001; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Phillipson, 1992, 2008). Despite this attention, the complexity of the issue has been reduced to a claim that the native/nonnative distinction is

simplistic and questionable. This dichotomy has its roots in viewing language and identity as fixed and unitary rather than dynamic and multiple. Not recognizing the multiple and overlapping nature of language and identity has led to marginalization of multilingual individuals (Benesch). In addition, Faez (2011a, 2011b) argues that linguistic identity, like other forms of identity, is socially constructed, that is, linguistic identities are multiple, dynamic, dialogic, and situated rather than unitary and fixed. Linguistic identities are negotiated and co-constructed in specific social contexts. Therefore, in order to view linguistic identities, it is important to examine the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they are co-constructed.

Critics denounce the privileges that native-speakers receive and the discrimination that non-native speakers experience through hiring practices (Amin, 1997; Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Phillipson, 1992, 2008). Native-speakers enjoy a favored status for employment opportunities in various professions and perhaps more so in the teaching profession. The dominant assumption that underlies this practice suggests that only white people are native-speakers and as such, are better qualified than teachers of color (Amin, 1997, 1999; Curtis & Romney, 2006). The centrality of race is evident in discussions of native-speakerism although in the literature race has yet to receive the attention that it deserves (Amin, 1997, 1999; Curtis & Romney; Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009; Motha, 2006; Romney, 2010). Kubota and Lin (2006) argue that the absence of discussion about race may be due to the association of race with racism. Other studies reveal that factors such as accent and ethnicity affect how students comprehend and evaluate their instructors regardless of their English proficiency (Lindemann, 2002; Rubin, 1992). Therefore, teachers in the highest demand are white native-speakers. Critics, who recognize the invaluable contribution of multilingual teachers in relating to their students through similar experiences in learning a second language and in dealing with discrimination, question this practice (Auerbach, 1993; Phillipson).

Teachers of color are recognized as being crucial to the success of students of color (Solomon, 1997; Zirkel, 2002) as they bring a unique perspective to education due to their personal experiences (Quiocho & Rios, 2000). Nonnative-English-speaking teachers have also been recognized for their personal and professional experiences with language-learning, which positions them advantageously in teaching language-learners. (I acknowledge the problems associated with the use of the term *nonnative-English-speaker*, Faez, 2011a, 2011b. However, I use the term when highlighting literature that has clearly identified as its goal the investigation of nonnative-English-speaking issues.) They may possess assets unavailable to their native-speaking counterparts (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001; Thomas, 1999). Further, they may be more empathic than native-English-speaking teachers toward language-learners through their own unique understanding of the challenges involved in learning another language (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Barratt & Kontra, 2000;

Medgyes, 2001). The inclusion of teachers of various racial and linguistic backgrounds in the school system is crucial in addressing proportionate representation (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009), provide suitable role models (Solomon, 1997), and in the exercise of equitable hiring practices.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

To understand conceptualizations of linguistic identities and experiences of Generation 1.5 TCs in this study, I have used Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical White Studies (CWS), and Positioning Theory. I have used CRT extensively to examine issues of race and racism (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Marx, 2009; Michael-Luna, 2009; Taylor, 2006). This framework, which has its roots in criticism of the US legal system, has a number of key tenets, including the pervasiveness of racism, the socially constructed nature of race and racism, and the lack of motivation to eliminate racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Adopting CRT allows for the examination of the effects of race and racism in various institutions and educational contexts.

An extension of CRT are CWS, which emphasize whiteness as a fundamental feature of a group that receives privileged status (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993; Marx, 2006, 2009). White privilege (McIntosh, 1989, 1997) prevails as an invisible norm for which diverse groups are Othered and racially defined. This privilege ranges from the convenience of finding suitable make-up color to being perceived as reliable, honest, smart, and clean. The invisibility of White privilege prevents whites from proactively combating racism and inequality. Frankenberg illustrates how white women in her study avoided any reference to race and racial difference, thus contributing to their power and privilege. As Scheurich (1993) argues, even if white people are cognizant of or against their unearned privileges, they certainly benefit from them. The combination of CRT and CWS provides a suitable lens through which to explore systemic racial privileges and inequality.

Positioning theory provides a paradigm for examining how diverse categories of people engage in interaction, position themselves, and are positioned in the community (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). The positions that people occupy in each community depend on the participants' perceptions of their rights and the place they holds in the sociocultural context in which they engage. In this framework, the distribution of power is closely linked to the designation of rights and duties. Therefore, if one member is positioned as an incompetent member, he or she may not be granted the right to engage in conversation with that group. It is important to acknowledge that these positions are dynamic rather than fixed, and they are socially constructed. Positioning theory is, therefore, a powerful method to examine how people of color position themselves and are positioned in educational contexts. Although in this article I focus on race, it is only one of many factors



such as gender, culture, sexuality, age, and social class that contribute to educational inequality. However, people of color have been racially disadvantaged throughout history, and for this reason I center on race.

## The Study

This exploration is a thread of a larger study, a year-long case study that examines the perceptions of linguistic identity and experiences of 25 linguistically diverse teacher candidates enrolled in a BEd program in one of Canada's multicultural cities. I focus on six Generation 1.5 TCs and offer new analyses. I foreground the significance of race in my analysis and juxtapose this with the perceptions of four Generation 1.5 TCs of color and two white participants. Lila, Sally, Peter, and Mr. Torres were non-white Generation 1.5 TCs, whereas Sandy and Mary were white (participants selected their own pseudonyms). These participants were members of a cohort in a BEd program with emphasis on teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, so many facets of social equity, discrimination, and power relationships were topics of discussion. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 36 years. This study combines qualitative approaches with critical discourse analysis. The broader study includes data from two hour-long interviews with each TC and three teacher educators who worked with them, questionnaire data, and observations gleaned through being present in their teacher education classrooms. The data are primarily drawn from the interviews with the Generation 1.5 TCs, whereas other sources helped to triangulate the data to provide understanding of the overall findings. Open-ended questions focused on perceptions of linguistic identity of TCs and their experiences in the program and beyond as they prepared to become high school teachers.

### *Participants*

Lila, Sally, and Sandy were born to immigrant families in Canada. Lila was born to Cantonese-speaking, Sally to Panjabi-speaking, and Sandy to Italian-speaking parents. English was their dominant and most easily accessed language despite their having learned their mother tongue before English. On the other hand, Peter, Mr. Torres, and Mary had immigrated to Canada from non-English-speaking countries, or in Mary's case, another English-speaking country. Peter had lived in China and Vietnam during his childhood and was 9 years old when his parents settled in Canada. Peter had learned Cantonese and Vietnamese before learning English at the age of 9, and although English was his third language, he was proficient. Mr. Torres was 14 when his parents moved to Canada from the Philippines. He had learned Tagalog before learning English, but he believed that English was his dominant language. Mary was born and raised in the Czech Republic and had completed her high school education in the United Kingdom before immigrating to Canada. At the time of the study, Mary was in her mid 30s and had been in Canada for

Table 1  
Participant Background Profiles

<i>Name</i>	<i>Place of birth</i>	<i>First language</i>	<i>Most proficient language</i>	<i>Age of arrival</i>	<i>Race</i>
Lila	Canada	Cantonese	English	N/A	Non-white
Sally	Canada	Punjabi	English	N/A	Non-white
Sandy	Canada	Italian	English	N/A	White
Peter	China	Cantonese	English	9	Non-white
Mr. Torres	Philippines	Tagalog	English	14	Non-white
Mary	Czech Republic	Czech	English	17	White

about 15 years. Due to her long residence in English-speaking countries and lack of contact with fellow countrymen, Mary's level of proficiency in English was better than in her first language, Czech. Given their backgrounds, Lila, Sally, Peter, and Mr. Torres were considered non-white, whereas Andy and Mary were white. The term *visible minority* is used extensively to refer to people of color. According to the Canadian Employment Equity Act, visible minorities are "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The term *visible minority* has been criticized by the United Nations and the Canadian Race Relations as discriminatory and racist. I use the terms *non-white* or *of color* to refer to individuals other than the Aboriginal population, who are neither Caucasian nor colored. The background profile of participants is represented in Table 1.

In what follows, the three themes that emerged from the interview data are highlighted: (a) linguistic identities of Generation 1.5, (b) experiences of Generation 1.5 TCs, and (c) preparedness of Generation 1.5 to teach in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Because of space limitations, only in a few excerpts under each theme are the voices of white and non-white Generation 1.5 TCs juxtaposed.

### *Linguistic Identity of Generation 1.5*

How do Generation 1.5s perceive their linguistic identity? What role does race play in their perceptions? During the course of the one-year study, through interviews, observations, and questionnaire data, the struggles of these Generation 1.5 TCs with how to identify their linguistic identity and assess their qualifications as native speakers were recognized. Many factors were addressed such as their level of language proficiency in their native language versus English, their country of birth, and the sociocultural context in which they negotiated their identity. The overriding factor for Generation



1.5 TCs seemed to be their racial background. All six participants were more proficient in English than in their first languages, so they needed to consider other factors that contributed to native-speaker status while recognizing native-speaker dominance.

Sandy said that her “skills are equivalent to [those of] a native-speaker,” so she considered herself a fluent native-speaker. She was comfortable asserting her native-English-speaking status, although she was adamant that her cultural identity was Italian. She told of her ignorance of racial issues as a high school student and indicated that she had been “racist” in assuming that all non-whites were “XXX [derogatory term for people of south Asia].” Sandy recognized her privileged status as a white person and acknowledged that although she was from an immigrant background, she was insensitive to issues that other immigrants faced, especially those of color, which indicates that white immigrants are unaware of discrimination toward immigrants of color.

I didn't know what was going on, like I think I was totally racist actually, like to me, all whether you're Indian, or Pakistani or whatever, they were all XXX [derogatory term for people of south Asia]. In my community, even in my family, like we just knew Italian culture, and that's it, like even our neighborhood, it was all Italian immigrants, so I learned a lot from that experience ... you would think because you are new to the country, and you're an immigrant, you might be more sensitive to other cultures as well, but it doesn't always work out that way. (Interview with Sandy)

Mary was uncertain of her native or non-native status and indicated she *thought* that she was a non-native-speaker, but found the distinction confusing. She focused on being born outside Canada and, therefore, of the possibility of not qualifying as a native-speaker in Canada. However, due to her high proficiency in English and her “white” appearance, she would probably pass as a native-speaker. She recognized the privileged status of native-speakers for employment opportunities and indicated that she took advantage of this when she wanted to teach abroad.

I think I am a non-native, a non-native-speaker of English. It's confusing isn't it? I am really more comfortable in English than in my first language. But I guess because I was not born here, I can't claim native status when I am in Canada. When I wanted to teach abroad, I had to say I was a native-English-speaker. They only hire native-speakers, and I can pass as a native-speaker. It all depends, right? Depends on the circumstances, the people, the situation, the purpose, and the list goes on. I think I can pass as a native-English-speaker. I am relatively proficient in English, and I am white. (Interview with Mary)

On the other hand, discourses of the four Generation 1.5 TCs of color revealed that their racial identity conflicted with how they positioned their linguistic identity. Although proficient in English, they struggled with asserting native-English-speaking status due to their racial background and the fear of not being accepted as native-speakers. Mr. Torres echoes these thoughts.

I don't know if it is proficiency or just comfort, but I am more comfortable in English [than in any other language]. My native language is almost forgotten, but I guess because I am not born here, I can't say I am a native-speaker. It's weird; I am in a weird situation. When I went to Japan to teach, I had to say I was a native-speaker 'cause they always employ a native-speaker, right? So it depends on the situation. It's all relative anyway! And I am not sure they would accept my claim! (Interview with Mr. Torres)

Mr. Torres spoke to the socially constructed notion of linguistic identity; although he was proficient in English, he was reluctant to claim a native-speaking identity as he was not born in Canada and so might not be accepted as a native-speaker. His claim about his "weird situation" deserves attention. He indicated later in the interview that he "didn't look like a native-speaker." Thus he was afraid that his native-speaking claim might not be accepted as perceptions seemed to equate nativeness with whiteness.

Peter, who had settled in Canada at the age of 9, indicated that he was "assumed" to be a "non-native-speaker" despite seeing himself as a native-speaker with sole proficiency in English. Because of his inability to speak Cantonese well, he was concerned about being unable to converse "intellectually" with his parents, who were proficient in Cantonese, but not in English. Having been born in China and perhaps due to his racial background as an individual of color, Peter did not believe that his self-perceived native-English status would be verified by the community. In addition, he was concerned that his professional identity as a teacher would be questioned by those who judge teachers based on race.

Because I am born in China, I am assumed to be a non-native-speaker even though English is my most proficient language. I see myself as a native-English-speaker because Cantonese and Vietnamese are gone for me; as I said, I can't have an intellectual conversation with my parents because they speak Cantonese, and I don't speak it very well. So I know I will have a harder time asserting my role as a teacher in the classroom in the eyes of those who think a good teacher is a native-English-speaker.

The juxtaposition of the quotes of white Generation 1.5 TCs and non-white Generation 1.5 TCs provides a glimpse into the centrality of race in the per-

ceptions of linguistic identities of Generation 1.5 individuals. Whereas white Generation 1.5 TCs, regardless of their country of birth, are comfortable asserting native-speaking status and are not concerned that their self-perceptions will be questioned, Generation 1.5 individuals of color are concerned that their self-perceptions will not be verified because of their skin color.

### *Experiences: Postcolonial Racism*

Generation 1.5 TCs' observations of their experiences varied. Whereas discourses of white Generation 1.5 TCs revealed privilege and acceptance, those of non-white Generation 1.5 were associated with marginalization, discrimination, and racism. *Postcolonial racism* is a term used to refer to experiences of marginalization and discrimination of non-white Generation 1.5 TCs where instances of racism were subtle, not overt or blatant, and similar to those of the colonial era. The following quotes from the white and non-white Generation 1.5 TCs demonstrate the differences in their experiences. The contrasts in the quotes reveal how subtle these variations are, particularly in contexts where being an immigrant is valued due to shared experiences with ELLs, but at the same time degraded when race is implicated.

Sandy acknowledged her dual privileged status as a white Italian from an immigrant family. In her view, her Italian background shielded her from racism, although she does belong to Generation 1.5. In addition, her background of being born and raised in an immigrant family could be an advantage for her in working with ELLs. As a result of growing up in a household where her parents did not speak English, she could better understand the challenges of immigrant children as well as the problems of learning an additional language.

I guess it [racism] is less of a problem for me because I am Italian; so if people are racist, I know they are not necessarily racist towards me. But I also I have the advantage of being from an immigrant family and understanding what it means to grow up with parents who don't speak English. (Interview with Sandy)

On the other hand, Sally, whose parents were from Pakistan and Punjabi-speaking, acknowledged her experiences with racism. Whereas her education level and her neighborhood with many south Asians were deemed advantages, her racial background was a source of discrimination and marginalization. She told how she felt Othered by people staring at her and her family because of their skin color while they were in a hotel in a predominantly white city. It seemed that the hotel personnel were suspicious of them and treated them differently than white guests. She was upset that their sincerity was questioned because of their skin color.

'Cause I know what it's like from my parents and in terms of racial background, I mean I've experienced racism, not as much, I know because I've grown up educated, and I've grown up in an area where there are lots of south Asians; it's not as much, but I still have experienced it [racism], like when I traveled to Halifax. We just got stared at and we got treated so differently, and you could tell, you walk into a hotel where you've booked a room, and they look at you so suspiciously, like what are you doing here right, like 'cause we're the only non-Caucasian family in the hotel, so you definitely feel it and it makes me really angry. I'm like, "I'm Canadian. I grew up here, and who are you to judge me based on my skin color?" (Interview with Sally)

Lila, who was born to Cantonese-speaking parents from China, avoided saying that she had personally experienced racism and did not refer to any of her own experiences with racism, perhaps because of the discomfort associated with articulating such experiences. Instead, she stated that racism was "huge" and existed everywhere, indicating that perhaps she had been the victim of discrimination at some point. For this reason, she was adamant about trying to stop racism by sending the message to her future students that such behavior was not acceptable and would not be tolerated.

It's [racism is] huge. I mean, you go into schools every day; you walk down the street every day; and there are obvious signs of racism everywhere. With being someone that will be in the school system, I think it's important to try to stop that. I think it's important to try to, I don't want to say cut it off at the root because I don't think the root is usually the teenagers, but I think it's important to put the message out there that we don't tolerate things like that and no, it's not OK to say this, and it's not acceptable to have someone else to refer to you in this way. (Interview with Lila)

The above quotes provide a glimpse into the various challenges that the non-white TCs faced as they navigated through their experiences and associated their racial identity with discrimination. Non-white Generation 1.5 TCs felt they were Othered, and thus their discourses revealed discrimination, marginalization, and racism, whereas the discourses of white Generation 1.5 TCs revealed privilege and acceptance.

### *Preparedness to Teach in Multilingual and Multicultural Classrooms*

Generation 1.5 TCs unanimously commented on their potential and strengths for teaching in Canada's multilingual and multicultural classrooms. However, although there were advantages that both white and non-white TCs at-

tributed to their understandings of learning a second language, non-white TCs also commented on their ability to relate to students of color.

Sandy, who was of Italian origin, noted her ability to relate to ELLs who were learning English in school while using their first language at home. She believed that ELLs were pleased to notice that like them, she used another language at home. At the same time, she commented that she was “invisible” as a teacher who did not speak English as her first language because she was white: Her comment on how ELLs look at her and think, “another white teacher,” indicates how ELLs value teachers of color because they think that only non-white teachers are non-native-speakers like themselves.

You know it’s really funny because the ESL students always look at me and think OK another white teacher, and as soon as I start saying, “I don’t speak English at home,” all the ESL students immediately crack up, and they say, “Really, really, miss, what language do you speak?” and I’ll say, “Italian,” and they’re like, “Wow, and like, you don’t have an accent and you speak really well.” (Interview with Sandy)

Sally, who was born to Punjabi-speaking parents, echoed the same view that she had a greater sensitivity toward ELLs. She too believed that her racial background as a non-white and her similar experiences to those of students of color would deepen her understanding of students in Toronto’s increasingly diverse classrooms. She was, however, cautious about perceptions of white students, who might judge her as not proficient. The excerpt below from Sally’s interview indicates that non-white Generation 1.5 TCs struggle to construct their professional identity as legitimate and credible teachers who are valued by their students.

I went through the same thing, and again, like I was talking before, just a greater sensitivity to ESL students, so I think that being a visible minority, I think it helps, I think it’s going to help me in understanding my students in the GTA schools. However, I am not sure how I will be viewed by white students. (Interview with Sally)

Peter commented that his status as a non-white gave him understanding and sensitivity toward students of color and increased his desire to advocate for them. He wanted to voice his message to other educators that students of diverse racial backgrounds may be proficient English-speakers without need of linguistic support.

My experience helps me to be an advocate for students of different racial groups; to send the message that if they are not white, it doesn’t mean they are non-native and need ESL support! (Interview with Peter)

Generation 1.5 TCs recognized their potential strengths and contributions in teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. They saw their experiences in learning additional languages and dealing with linguistic and cultural prejudice as assets that would facilitate their relating to students from diverse backgrounds. Generation 1.5 TCs of color in particular were cognizant of their significant presence as role models for non-white students. They could relate to them as white teachers were unable to do, and so were invaluable resources for multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic classrooms.

## **Discussion**

As the data show, Generation 1.5 TCs of color experienced difficulty in asserting their native status, as they were skeptical about acceptance by the local community in which they were engaged. Race appeared to be the most significant factor that kept non-white Generation 1.5 TCs from asserting their status as native-speakers. Even though non-white Generation 1.5 participants did not speak their mother tongue as fluently as they spoke English, they knew that their race would interfere with their assertions of native status, and therefore positioned themselves as non-native-speakers. Notions of non-nativeness were attributed to their race, so their linguistic identity was in conflict with their racial identity. Feelings of confusion about their linguistic identity were prevalent among Generation 1.5 TCs of color. Romney (2010) refers to this phenomenon as “linguistic racial profiling” (p. 26), which indicates that judgments are made about English-speakers based on their race rather than on linguistic factors. In other words, racial factors rather than linguistic factors determine if an individual is perceived as a native-English-speaker (Curtis & Romney, 2006; Romney; Wong, 2006). White Generation 1.5 TCs, however, felt comfortable positioning themselves as native-speakers because their claims of native status would not be challenged by members of the community, who would perceive white individuals as fluent native-speakers. The matter of Generation 1.5 individuals positioning themselves as native- or non-native-speakers was found in beliefs about race.

The dynamic and socially constructed nature of linguistic identities (Faez, 2011a, 2011b) became more visible when Generation 1.5 TCs revealed how they would negotiate native or non-native identities in various social contexts. In the multilingual and multicultural context of Toronto classrooms, where being a non-native-speaker could be viewed as an asset, Generation 1.5 TCs felt comfortable asserting a non-native status. Instead, in foreign-language contexts, where being a native-English-speaker is either more valued or even required, participants would try to assert a native-speaker status. However, whereas white Generation 1.5 TCs felt comfortable that their assertions would be accepted due to their whiteness, non-white Generation 1.5s were skeptical that their assertions of being native-speakers would be accepted due to their skin color.



Furthermore, findings revealed how TCs' experiences were complicated by their racial identities. The pervasiveness of racism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) was apparent in comparing the discourses of white and non-white Generation 1.5 TCs. Race appeared to be central to the experiences of Generation 1.5 TCs (Benesch, 2008). Discourses of white Generation 1.5 TCs revealed perceptions of privilege, the superiority of whiteness, and native-speaker status (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993; Marx, 2006, 2009; McIntosh, 1997). White Generation 1.5 TCs revealed how they could take advantage of their whiteness and said that they would not experience racism due to their racial identity. On the other hand, non-white Generation 1.5 TCs expressed concerns about racism and "problematic characterizations and deficit-oriented explanations" (Talmy, 2001, p. 2) of their identity. Some non-white Generation 1.5s indicated that they felt their honesty and sincerity were questioned (e.g., Sally). Experiences of Generation 1.5s were in the form of postcolonial racism because they were subtle rather than explicit and blatant. Unlike in colonial times when discrimination manifested itself explicitly in the form of individuals of color having to sit at the back of the bus or being denied entry into certain positions of employment, non-white Generation 1.5 TCs expressed more subtle and sophisticated instances of discrimination. People of color continue to experience racism in their daily lives. West (1994) notes that race matters when considering the experiences of white and non-white Generation 1.5 TCs. Arbitrary and dynamic features such as skin color, place of birth, and shape of eyes were recognized as sources of privilege for white Generation 1.5 TCs (Dei, 1996).

Although Generation 1.5 TCs were conscious of the advantages attributed to being a native-speaker in some contexts, they recognized their potential as non-native-speakers in other contexts. Their personal and professional experiences in learning English and in being individuals of color contributed to a higher self-perceived empathy toward ELLs and especially toward students of color. These characteristics are assets for teaching in today's multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Findings conform to the existing literature on non-native-speaking teachers and their potential as language teachers. They tend to be more empathic toward ELLs and understand their struggles with learning a second language (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 2001). All the Generation 1.5 TCs in this study indicated that their language-learning experiences and their bi/multilingualism would be assets in supporting ELLs' language development. Furthermore, non-white Generation 1.5 TCs felt that they could relate to students of color and were well suited to address issues of race and white privilege. These findings are in accord with current literature that racially diverse teachers bring a unique understanding of diversity issues to education and serve as suitable role models for students of color (Ryan et al., 2009; Solomon, 1997).

## Implications

The findings presented here make a strong case for attending to issues of race, racism, and critical race theory in ELT and teacher education programs. Linguistic identities are racialized and socially constructed. Therefore, examining the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts in which Generation 1.5 individuals co-construct their identity is important. Educational institutions, especially K-12 teacher education and TESL programs, need to problematize the white racial ideology of native-speakerism and deconstruct racial assumptions about who qualifies as a good teacher. In a globalized world where English is recognized as a global language, it is vital to recognize that its speakers or *native-speakers* need to be positioned globally. Teacher education and TESL programs should include content that draws on critical race theory to challenge the inequities that dominate society generally and the teaching profession specifically. The strengths and skills of multilingual speakers and people of color for globalized classrooms should be capitalized in these programs. Such discussions enhance teacher-candidates' understanding of institutional and systemic racism and prepare them to address issues of race, racism, discrimination, and marginalization in their classrooms.

Educational institutions must develop policies and practices to combat linguistic and racial discrimination in their hiring practices. They should work actively to eliminate ideologies that equate teaching qualifications with native-speakerism and whiteness. To combat racial discrimination, I recommend an increase in the number of professionals of color in the teaching profession. As a result of this, issues of underrepresentation and marginalization of teachers of color would be addressed. In addition, it is important to provide fair and equitable working conditions for teachers of color. To this end, working toward pedagogical and policy reforms in the teaching profession and ELT should be at the forefront of all decisions.

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