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Exploring Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Black Students

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EXPLORING PRESERVICE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACK STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The majority of the preservice teacher population is young, White, and female; however, the urban school system student population continues to become increasingly diverse, including an increasing population of underserved Black students in urban schools. The racial differences between the preservice teacher population and the urban student population complicates the challenges faced in educating Black students effectively. Teachers and students often encounter misunderstandings, and thus, utilize incompatible styles of classroom management and instruction, often resulting in Black students experiencing difficulties with learning. Many of these complications derive from the profound presence of race, racial difference, and racial inequality throughout U.S. history.

The purpose of this research was to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers, who self-identify as White, toward future Black students at a large, southeastern, Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study examined preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. This study also observed preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Using information from a 10-question qualitative interview of three (3) research participants, this thesis explored the following questions: Research question one (RQ1): How do preservice teachers define race and racism?, Research question two (RQ2): What factors contribute to preservice teachers' racial perspectives?, and Research question three (RQ3): What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students?

DEDICATED

To

My Mother
For always encouraging me to do my personal best

My Father
For always understanding

My Family
For always rooting for me

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The history of race, racism, and racial inequality in the United States has profoundly impacted society, and has had a negative effect on urban school systems. Preservice teachers, defined as any student teachers before they have been certified and/or employed as a professional teacher, face difficulty in teaching diverse students due to the fact personal racial perspectives and biases impact the classroom environment, however unintentionally. It is important for preservice teachers to explore their racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward Black students which are one of the most underserved diverse student populations. This will prompt further exploration into preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. In doing so, preservice teachers will be better prepared in serving diverse learners, which will benefit society as a whole.

For the purpose of this study, Black will refer to any individual who has dark-colored skin, with no correlation with any other factor such as ethnicity, nationality, heritage, or culture. Black will not be limited to those who are of African descent, as traditionally thought, because there are many individuals who identify as Black originating from many different nations. Conversely, White will refer to any individual who has light-colored skin, with no correlation with any other factor such as ethnicity, nationality, heritage, or culture. This study seeks to discover the attitudes of preservice teachers solely on the basis of racial skin color. Due to the idea of race as a social construct, described in Chapter Two, the identification of both Black and

White lie on a continuum. Each term will remain capitalized throughout this writing to give proper respect to each, respectively.

Entering an urban school system is a challenge that comes with many obstacles. The "geographic area, rate of poverty, proportion of students of color, proportion of students who are Limited English Proficient, and 'High Need' status" of a school determine the strengths and weaknesses which teachers face within the profession (Russo, 2004). The degree to which each of these factors are met determines if school is classified as urban. For example, if a school has a high rate of each of the factors listed above, it is more likely to be classified as an urban school.

According to the RtI Action Network,

Urban school systems tend to have specific structural challenges that impede their ability to effectively educate the most vulnerable students. While these structural challenges may be evidenced across all types of educational contexts, they are perhaps most potent in urban settings. They include 1) persistently low student achievement, 2) a lack of instructional coherence, 3) inexperienced teaching staff, 4) poorly functioning business operations, and 5) low expectations of students (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2016).

Urban education has a long and hard history of racial inequality, segregation, and low student achievement, which has ultimately led to the current state in which low achievement and expectations are often the norm, among many other things. This issue has many complex causes, but it also has many valuable solutions. It is up to the teaching force as a whole to unite for successful, sustainable reform within urban school systems. This begins with preservice teachers, who are the building blocks of the future of education. Due to a certain malleability, preservice teachers can benefit tremendously from urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs to meet the needs of one of the most vulnerable students, the Black urban student population. Through unity and understanding, preservice teachers can create the

conditions for hope and possibility in communities and schools, which includes increasing educational attainment and achievement.

However, in order to do so, preservice teachers must be willing to address certain weaknesses within themselves regarding perpetuating some of the issues within the urban school system. Thus, preservice teachers must identify certain internal factors, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might negatively impact their ability to connect with communities of color. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

The U.S. society, including the preservice teacher population, faces difficulty in discussing these issues due to an element of discomfort in discussing race, racism, and racial inequality, which have festered throughout U.S. history. According to "Urban Immersion: Changing Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Urban Schools,"

> If preservice teachers form attitudes and expectations based on uninformed perceptions of urban school environments and carry these into their future classrooms, it may negatively influence their ability to effectively teach and connect with their students (Schaffer, Gleich-Bope, & Copich, 2014).

Thus, research examines the attitudes of preservice teachers towards Black students, which derive from a complex combination of social issues, racial experiences, and racial perspectives within the urban education system and society as a whole. In doing so, the preservice teacher population will have a greater understanding of how their attitudes impact Black students' education and learning. Furthermore, society as a whole will benefit from a more open and honest conversation about how race impacts education and learning. Therefore, Black

students in the urban education system will have a more positive learning experience, when preservice teachers are better equipped and more comfortable in examining their own racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might impede their effectiveness in teaching.

Statement of Problem

The majority of the preservice teacher population is young, White, and female; however, the urban school system student population continues to become increasingly diverse, including an increasing population of underserved Black students in urban schools. The racial differences between the preservice teacher population and the urban student population complicates the challenges faced in educating Black students effectively, largely due to the societal ignorance of the histories and realities of urban communities (Delpit, 1992, p. 182). Teachers and students often encounter misunderstandings, and thus, utilize incompatible styles of classroom management and instruction, often resulting in Black students experiencing difficulties with learning.

Many of these complications derive from the profound presence of race, racial difference, and racial inequality throughout U.S. history. As societal policies have shaped racial perspectives throughout history, a clear division and notable difference between the racial composition of preservice teachers and Black students exists due to certain racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes. More research needs to address how ideas, experiences, and attitudes shape the racial perspectives of preservice teachers toward their future Black students in order to promote learning and academic gains within the urban education system.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers, who self-identify as White, toward future Black students at a large, southeastern, Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study examined preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. This study also observed preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Significance of Study

Racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students will increase personal and professional understandings of how race impacts the urban education system as a whole, as well as individual classrooms and students. The increase in racial diversity within the student population highlights the need for more effective urban education experience and diversity awareness training within preservice teacher education programs. Thus, teacher education programs that recognize the attitudes of preservice teachers towards Black students will be better able to train preservice teachers for entrance into the diverse classroom, in terms of both classroom management and teaching. In terms of research, the study helps to uncover critical areas in the educational process that remain unexplained. Thus, a new perspective on urban education experience and diversity awareness may be attained.

Theoretical Perspectives

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory derives from a critical analysis of race, racism, and power from a legal perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, it has recently been applied to the field of education regarding social inequality and school inequality, based on the following ideas:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.

2. U.S. society is based on property rights.

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

For the purpose of this study, Critical Race Theory is applied to research regarding social inequality between Whites and Blacks, as well as inequality of urban school systems. Historically, there have been fixed inequalities between Whites and Blacks due to the social construct of race, which has profoundly impacted society and social policy. This has led to a complex combination of social issues, racial experiences, and racial perspectives within the urban education system and the U.S. society as a whole. For example, "race has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological 'race' ever was" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Specifically, the idea that race continues to be an important factor in inequality in the 21st century is supported throughout research due to the fact that, generally, a large proportion of Blacks in urban communities suffer from disadvantages, unlike that of the majority, White population, due to certain historical and social factors. In addition, the idea that the U.S. society

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has a foundation in property rights is supported through research due for multiple reasons. For example, "property tax relief indicate[s] that more affluent communities (which have higher property values, hence higher tax assessments) resent paying for a public school system whose clientele is largely nonwhite and poor. In the simplest of equations, those with 'better' property are entitled to 'better' schools" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is significant for urban school systems due to the fact that they have a higher proportion of poverty, which contributes to the difficulties within the school and community.

Each of these factors creates a situation which can be analyzed through a historical perspective, as to why there continues to be issues within the urban education system, specifically affecting Black students. Through careful analysis of preservice teachers' racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students, the Critical Race Theory is beneficial in connecting the reasoning of such with certain historical events regarding race and racism within society, and how it impacts the urban education system as a whole.

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical Whiteness Theory derives from a critical analysis of the functions of the theory of whiteness within society, specifically,

> Critical Whiteness Theory illuminates 'behaviors that signify what it means to be white in our society' […] Critical Whiteness Theory stresses that whiteness 'has a set of linked dimensions' that include racial advantage, egocentrism, and oblivion to whiteness as race, and thus, whiteness is theorized as "a location of structural advantage," whether realized or unrealized by White people (Cullen, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, Critical Whiteness Theory is applied to research regarding preservice attitudes towards future Black students due to the fact that the U.S. society,

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historically, has been created and shaped by the majority, White population. Due to the predominant demographic of White preservice teachers, a correlation between whiteness and the attitudes that White preservice teachers have regarding individuals of differing races, specifically Black students, exists within urban education systems. This study is analyzed through a perspective that states that whiteness is a theme that pervades society, which essentially represses minority populations and advantages the majority, White population (Cullen, 2014). Through careful analysis of interviews of preservice teachers' racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students, the Critical Whiteness Theory is beneficial in connecting the reasoning of such with events regarding race and racism within society, and how it impacts the urban education system as a whole.

<u>Rationale for the Study</u>

Research in urban education primarily examines its historical context (Tyack, 1974); philosophical or theoretical foundations (Freire, 2005); impetus, growth, and development (Black & Henderson, 1999; Connell & Klem, 2000); structural and cultural challenges; and policies and practices (Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). Research studies closely related to this project examine the overall effects of urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs on preservice teachers' effectiveness in teaching diverse student populations (Milner, 2006; Brown, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Wiggins, 2007). However, there is little evidence of research which examines the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students, and the manner in which preservice teachers discuss these

topics. More specifically, little research has been conducted regarding preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black, or urban, culture.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

This chapter defines race, examine various historical events relating to race, as well as consider how race specifically influences the Florida education system. In addition, this chapter examines the legislative history of various Federal and state of Florida education programs and policies as they relate to racial equality and academic accountability, as well as achievement gaps between Black students and their White counterparts. This chapter also discusses various factors that affect academic performance, and how that relates to racial differences and inequalities in the education system.

Furthermore, this chapter outlines the contemporary preservice teacher demographic profile, as well as discusses topics such as the development of racial perspectives and attitudes toward Black students. This research relates to the field of preservice teacher urban education experience and diversity awareness training programs. Extensive research provides a strong foundation for a critical study of race relations, and possible racial tensions, between contemporary preservice teachers and Black students due to certain factors such as sensitivity towards Black students.

<u>Defining Race</u>

According to Eric Thompson, Ph.D. at the National University of Singapore, "race is 1) a social construct that is 2) poorly descriptive of the phenomenon it seeks to describe and 3) has a long history of devastating consequences for individuals"(Thompson, 2006). With this, Thompson asserts that biological differences do play some role in the determination of race;

however, the term is better described as a socially constructed concept based on observable, similar and distinct physical characteristics used to identify individuals and populations in a societal context (Thompson, 2006). Biological genes determine race along a continuum, meaning that there is no specific genetic characteristic which differentiates one racial group from another. Instead,

> Conceptually, race is about division and difference. The motivating logic of racial classification is to place individual bodies into differentiated groups. […] The question is—why use a concept which has an underlying logic at odds with genetic evidence? (Thompson, 2006).

> Biological genes for skin color do not influence other biological characteristics.

Essentially, "most human variation falls within, not between populations. […] In fact, there are no characteristics, no traits, not even one gene that turns up in all members of one so-called race yet is absent from others" (Adelman, 2003). Biological makeup indicates ancestry of individuals and populations; however, it is not useful in determining characteristics such as race because there is no correlation between an entire racial population and one or more biological characteristics (Adelman, 2003).

Therefore, race is a social construct, meaning that it appears to be natural and obvious to people who accept it, but it does not represent realistic biological differences between individuals and populations. Yes, superficial differences are present, specifically skin color. However, race alone does not signify differences between other biological characteristics among various individuals and populations. Identification of race within society generally leads to an association of an abundance of other unrelated characteristics, which often leads to division and

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difference, rather than a truly constructive and meaningful understanding and analysis of race and how it functions within society.

Essentially, race holds no merit in the association of any other physical variations in the human species besides skin color. Instead, it is concerned with social perspectives, which perpetuate certain worldviews of privilege, power, status, and wealth, or lack thereof, depending on the particular population. The concept of race was created by society in order to perpetuate racial differences and inequalities, which resulted in many trials and tribulations throughout history (Thompson, 2006).

The History of Race in the U.S.

Throughout history, the conception of the idea of race and racial difference had most closely been linked to the institution of slavery. However, in ancient times, societies valued language, religion, and class more than physical characteristics, such as skin color. Ancient societies "enslaved others due to conquest, war or debt, but not based on physical difference" (Adelman, 2003).

According to historians, the term slavery actually originated from the historic movement of primarily White Germans capturing primarily White Slavonic peoples in the 15th century (Adelman, 2003). During that time period, slavery was not signified by physical difference, rather it was for the sole purpose of exerting power over other individuals and populations. At the time, slavery did not denote inferiority of a group of people based on physical difference, rather it simply existed for many groups due to varying circumstances, such as conquest, war or debt, as mentioned above.

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However, the U.S. had a much different historical experience with slavery than other societies, which ultimately led to the creation of the concepts of race, racial difference, and racial inferiority. According to *The African Slave Trade*, "the lords of Africa began to sell their own folk to the mariners who came from Europe" to then bring to the U.S. to begin the slave system during the 17th century (Davidson, 1961). As slavery became industrialized and institutionalized in colonial U.S. in the 17th century, it became synonymous with racial difference due to the fact that the large majority of the slave population in the U.S. originated from West Africa, which was of much different physical characteristics than that of the majority, White U.S. population.

Slavery began to symbolize the enslavement of an entire group of people based on origin, and more superficially, skin color. Although the majority of slave owners in the U.S. were members of the White population, history confirms that there were also a number of Black slave owners who engaged in the slave system; however, they had varying intentions, which included increasing financial prosperity, rather than to perpetuate racial inequality. According to *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina*, "Black slave owners were motivated by financial gain and just as invested in the slave system as Whites and were not primarily motivated by beneficence (though, as he points out, many undoubtedly were)" (Koger, 2011).

During the time of the American Revolution from 1775-1783, the Founding Fathers faced various moral dilemmas in proclaiming "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" through the Declaration of Independence (Franklin, Adams, Livingston, Sherman, & Jefferson, 1776). Because the Founding Fathers simultaneously protected the institution of slavery, this created a "moral contradiction" and "the idea of race helped resolve the contradiction by setting

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[Blacks] apart" (Adelman, 2003). The creation of the idea of Black inferiority allowed the Founding Fathers to "justify denying slaves the rights and entitlements that others took for granted" (Adelman, 2003). Essentially, Blacks were not considered citizens, and they had no legal rights. Instead, they were treated as property.

With certain racial differences explicitly described in founding documents, such as the Constitution, which was signed in 1787, it set the tone for racial inequality between Whites and Blacks in the U.S. as a whole. With this, the idea of race was constructed and would prove to have a profound impact on society throughout history.

As the institution of slavery was protected by the Founding Fathers, it was apparent that there was an innate social inequality between Whites and Blacks. Based on newfound documents and policies, various social ideas began to influence research and discoveries related to race (Adelman, 2003). Many influential Americans began to call on researchers to rationalize racial inequalities and justify harsh discriminatory laws through the use of scientific reason.

For example, Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and slave owner who was principal author of the Declaration of Independence, suggested that Blacks were innately inferior in his text, *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

> I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the [B]lacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the [W]hites in the endowments both of body and mind (Jefferson, 1853).

Jefferson's text rationalized slavery, and called on science to find biological proof of inequalities among the races to support his claims. This began the scientific movement in the late 18th century of determining racial biology in order to affirm that Blacks were, indeed,

biologically inferior to Whites, which would aid in the continuation of racial discrimination and

unequal rights.

As Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, he strongly opposed the institution of

slavery, which further prompted the South to succeed from the Union (World History Group,

2016). The American Civil War began between the North and South in 1861. At the time,

Northern states had adopted an anti-slavery policy of freedom for all Blacks; still, the South

continued a harsh system of slavery. During the war, the North fought for the rights of Blacks

and slaves to be treated equally, by essentially abolishing slavery across the nation. Conversely,

the South fought for the preservation of slavery in order to promote the racial inequality of

Blacks, and to further enable Whites to continue with the financial prosperity that slavery

awarded (World History Group, 2016).

After one of the bloodiest wars in U.S. history, the South finally surrendered to the North

in 1865 (World History Group, 2016). With this, the North and South unified as one, once again,

and slavery was abolished with the passing of the 13th amendment to the Constitution. Although

slavery was abolished, the U.S. did not see an end to racial inequality and legal injustice for

many years to come. Still, according to the *World History Group*,

> Other legislation followed, including the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth
> Amendment; both repealed the Dred Scott decision and made [B]lacks full U.S. citizens.
> The Fifteenth Amendment granted [B]lack men the right to vote and gave Congress the
> power to enact laws protecting that right (World History Group, 2016).

Although Blacks gained some legal rights, perhaps one of the most detrimental policies to

achieving legal equality was the 1896 "equal, but separate" law, which mandated "equal but

separate accommodations for the [W]hite and colors race" from the United States Supreme Court

decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Lofgren, 1987). This doctrine applied to many different areas within society, and led to the 1899 Supreme Court decision in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, "which had validated the segregation of public schools" (American Anthropological Association, 2015). These policies deeply affected the education system in the U.S. society as a whole due to the fact that the public sector had a legal obligation to continue racism, racial difference, and racial inequality by separating Whites from Blacks within the public school system.

Blacks in the U.S. continued to gain equal legal rights through significant legislation; however, it was not until the Civil Rights Movement, beginning in the 1950s, that Blacks would progress in achieving equality, specifically in the education system. According to the American Anthropological Association,

> [In] 1954, the Supreme Court handed down a 9-0 decision in Brown v. Board of Education, which stated, "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The decision reversed the precedent set by the Supreme Court's previous decision in Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education […] Brown did not, however, result in the immediate desegregation of America's public schools, nor did it mandate desegregation of public accommodations, such as restaurants or bathrooms that were private property (American Anthropological Association, 2015).

Regardless of changing political policies at the Federal level, Florida, specifically, maintained strict segregation policies. In an effort to stop desegregation efforts prior to 1954, the Florida State Legislature voted to increase funding to Black schools to equalize funding between White and Black schools to satisfy the doctrine and avoid integrating each race. However, the courts proceeded with their decision to dismantle the "separate but equal" doctrine. While desegregation was implemented in some Florida school districts, other counties, namely Duval, Miami-Dade, and Orange County seemed untouched by school desegregation efforts (Borman, et

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al., 2004, p. 611). *Accountability in a Postdesegregation Era: The Continuing Significance of Racial Segregation in Florida's Schools*, by Kathryn Borman, described Florida's reaction to desegregation,

> […] on the same day the U.S. Supreme Court demanded that southern districts assume responsibility for desegregating schools, Florida Governor LeRoy Collins signed the Florida Pupil Assignment Law. This law, which was strengthened in 1956, empowered county school boards to assign pupils to schools on the basis of "sociological, psychological and like intangible socio-scientific factors" […]. The law essentially provided a loophole for schools wishing to avoid desegregation (Borman, et al., 2004, p. 610)

Although many states continued to resist desegregation efforts, the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 primarily prohibited racial discrimination and finally provided for the desegregation of public schools (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration , n.d.) Furthermore, in reaction to anti-desegregation efforts by states, including Florida, in 1968 "*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (Virginia), rule[d] that 'actual desegregation' of schools in the South is required, effectively ruling out so-called school 'freedom of choice' plans and requiring affirmative action to achieve integrated schools" (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights & The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2016). For segregated communities and school systems across the nation, this meant that states were required to desegregate by all means necessary, which included bussing both White and Black students from differing, inherently segregated communities to promote racial equality within the public education system.

Blacks in the post-Civil Rights Era continued to face persistent inequality as they sought equality due to the resistance that society showed in accepting newfound legal and social policies. According to Ferris State University, Blacks "did not emerge from the civil rights

movement fully integrated into U.S. society; this is evident by the disproportionately large numbers of blacks who are in poverty, under-educated, and incarcerated" (Ferris State University, 2014).

Still, remarkable advances have been made by Black Americans in the last sixty years or more. Black men and women have had the opportunity to become CEOs, mayors, senators, and even most recently, the President of the United States. Still, the Black population as a whole continues to experience disadvantages unlike that of the majority, White population, due to a troubled history which has profoundly impacted the way that Americans view race and racism in modern society.

The Relevance of Race in the 21st Century

Race has been incredibly significant throughout U.S. history, and it continues to be deeply imbedded into U.S. culture. Tim Wise, anti-racist social activist and author of *White Like Me* (2007), asserts

> We are all experiencing race, because from the beginning of our lives we have been living in a racialized society, where the color of our skin means something, even while it remains a matter of biological and genetic irrelevance. Race may be a scientific fiction, but it is a social fact, one that none of us can escape no matter how much or how little we talk about it (Wise, 2007).

The U.S. society has made substantial progress in advancing the civil rights of the Black population, through various social and political movements. Since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, which advocated for full legal equality of Blacks, racial differences and tensions have improved, to say the least. Blacks have attained full legal equality, as well as Constitutional

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voting rights. Furthermore, state-sponsored segregation was outlawed and it was found that separate was not equal regarding public education facilities.

Remarkable advances have been made by Black Americans in the last sixty years or more. Still, the Black population as a whole continues to experience disadvantages unlike that of the majority, White population. For example, Black students in Florida have a high school graduation rate of 69.7%, while their White counterparts have a high school graduation rate of 82.7% (Florida Department of Education, 2015). This gap of 13 percentage points in educational attainment is a real problem for the Black community, as well as the U.S. society as a whole. Without something as essential as attaining a basic high school diploma, approximately 30% of the Black student population in Florida is entering the workforce at an extreme disadvantage, which is a social and economic issue for the U.S. society.

In addition, racial segregation from the pre-Civil Rights era has somewhat resettled, and some schools across Florida are reported to lack diversity. That does not necessarily mean that Florida's schools do not have a high minority enrollment. In fact, Florida has a more diverse student population than many other states. However, a high minority enrollment does not necessarily lead to more school diversity. Instead, students who attend schools with either extreme, very high or low minority enrollment, are not exposed to diverse populations of a different racial groups.

According *to Decomposing School Resegregation: Social Closure, Racial Imbalance, and Racial Isolation*, minority groups attend school with fewer Whites in recent years due to a declining presence of Whites in minorities' schools, which was driven by changes in student

population's racial composition (Fiel, 2013, p. 25). The two main areas of concern regarding resegregation are lack of exposure to other races and cultures, as well as an imbalance between race relations.

Florida's education system has made tremendous improvements in education; however, history indicates that some student populations are at a greater disadvantage than others, namely Black student populations. Many school districts continue to struggle with the pressures of high academic achievement without the necessary resources and funding. Therefore, the Black student population continues to have lower academic performance scores than that of majority, White population. This leads to lower graduation rates, as mentioned before.

As a 21st century society, it is imperative that factors of success, such as educational attainment and achievement, are improved in the U.S. However, the U.S. is falling behind at a disparaging 20th place in educational attainment relative to other nations (Pearson, 2016). Large differences among racial achievement is not a misconception, nor is it a coincidence. The U.S. should work towards actively closing achievement gaps between races. However, this issue in particular will continue to plague the U.S. as long as racial prejudice and discrimination remain.

Until members of society, specifically preservice teachers, explore their own racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes, the U.S. will continue to face education inequalities which will lead to a perpetuation of disengaged and disenfranchised groups of students and citizens in primarily Black and urban neighborhoods. The long history of race, racial difference, and racial inequality has extended into the 21st century due to unsettled issues within society, directly impacting urban

education, including Black students, which are one of the most underserved diverse student populations.

<div align="center">Disproportionate Preservice Teacher Demographics and Student Demographics</div>

Research confirms that a trend of racial division between the demographics of the preservice teacher population and that of the student population. While the majority of the contemporary preservice teacher population is increasingly White, middle-class, and female, the student population is increasingly diverse (Lowenstein, 2009). According to statistical evidence, "White teachers represent 86% of the teaching force and the vast majority (80%-93%) of students enrolled in teacher education programs are White" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Lack of diversity within the teaching profession is critical when the student population as a whole, especially the urban student population, continues to increase in diversity. In fact, "40% of the school population is now from racially […] diverse groups" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Although the majority of preservice teachers are also classified as middle-class and female, which is unrepresentative of the diverse student population, these factors will be treated as separate issues which are not examined within the context of this study due to the fact that the primary focus of this study is race.

The question remains: Why does the preservice teacher population continue to be homogeneously White? Research points to the fact that White privilege within society significantly contributes to the attractiveness of the teaching profession between various racial groups (Cullen, 2014). For the White population, whiteness is consistently represented positively in daily experiences; and, furthermore, whiteness has constantly reflected back from sources of

power (Guess, 2006, p. 656). The White population as a whole, including the majority of White preservice teachers, are at an innate advantage regarding reporting a positive schooling experience, due to the fact that, historically, the education system was created for and by the White population. Therefore, many preservice teachers report having a positive schooling experience, and return to the public school system as their chosen profession.

However, the Black population does not report as having the same or similar experiences. Instead, Blacks the nation report as having a schooling experience in which whiteness is consistently reflected back from sources of power. With this, a large percentage of the Black population does not necessarily report having an especially positive schooling experience; therefore, there is a lack of Black representation within the preservice teacher population because, historically, the education system has failed in adequately representing, educating, and appropriately mentoring the Black student population.

The consequences of the demographic differences between the preservice teacher population and the student population are vast and varied. However, the most significant challenge is the fact that "White preservice teachers, who have mono-cultural realities, insulated lives, and immature experiences" face difficulty in connecting with diverse student populations, specifically in urban schools, which include the highest proportion of Black students (Hill-Jackson, 2007, pp. 29-35). This contributes to that idea that the majority of the preservice teacher population, which has been consistently advantaged due to whiteness throughout history, struggles to connect to a student population which has not been exposed to such advantages, namely the Black student population within urban schools. This creates disconnection "between

the lived reality of White preservice teachers and the lived realities of [Black students]" which can cause resistance in the classroom (Hill-Jackson, 2007, pp. 29-35).

The lack of representation of the Black population within the preservice teacher population impacts the education system, and specifically urban schools, negatively due to the fact that the student population continues to be underserved due to the consequences whiteness. For example, research "found that preservice student teachers are fairly naïve and have stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education" (Sleeter, 2001, p. 95). Although U.S. society might not be able to immediately impact the numbers of Black teachers that enter the profession, society can encourage White teachers to become more culturally sensitive in their current positions.

As whiteness continues to impact the development of racial perspectives and attitudes, it perpetuates the idea of racial inequality within society. Preservice teachers must be willing to address certain weaknesses within themselves regarding perpetuating some of the issues within the urban school system. Thus, preservice teachers must identify certain internal issues, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which might negatively impact their ability to create positive social change for Black, or urban, communities. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

Possible Influences on Preservice Teacher Racial Attitudes toward Future Black Students within the Urban Education System

The U.S. Department of Education reports that "about 84% of the nation's teachers are White" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). When addressing preservice teachers' attitudes towards future Black students, it is important to note that the especially high proportion of White individuals within the teaching force allows for a critical analysis of the possible influences on racial attitudes of White preservice teachers.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an attitude is defined as "[1] the way you think and feel about someone or something" or "[2] a feeling or way of thinking that affects a person's behavior" (attitude, 2015). In the specific context of race, a racial attitude is a feeling or way of thinking, relating to the social construct of race, which effects behavior. Racial attitudes may be negative or positive, depending on the particular individual or population which forms the attitude. Racial attitudes shape behavior. Depending on certain feelings and thoughts, the attitudes and behaviors may have positive of negative consequences. For example, when an individual has a positive racial attitude regarding another individual or population, it will positively impact their behavior, which increases the likelihood of a positive experience, and vice versa. This is true regarding the racial attitudes of preservice teachers towards future Black students. The development of racial attitudes, with many possible influences, impacts the way in which preservice teachers behave and treat future Black students in an urban school setting.

There are many possible influences of the development of racial attitudes, which derive from certain ideas and experiences. The profound impact that race, racial difference, and racial inequality has had on U.S. history has shaped political and societal feelings and thoughts regarding racial attitudes. These factors have indirectly shaped individual feelings and thoughts,

which have further shaped the development of racial attitudes. As a whole, the U.S. society has integrated the theme of Whiteness, which continues to impact the development of racial attitudes. Thus, it perpetuates the idea of racial inequality within society. Preservice teachers must identify certain internal issues, regarding the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes toward future Black students within the urban education system, which impact their behavior towards this particular population. More specifically, preservice teachers must discuss and identify their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

The majority of the preservice teacher population is young, White, and female; however, the urban school system student population continues to become increasingly diverse, including an increasing population of underserved Black students in urban schools. The racial differences between the preservice teacher population and the urban student population complicates the challenges faced in educating Black students effectively. Teachers and students often encounter misunderstandings, and thus, utilize incompatible styles of classroom management and instruction, often resulting in Black students experiencing difficulties with learning. Many of these complications derive from the profound presence of race, racial difference, and racial inequality throughout U.S. history.

The following chapter will describe the methodology utilized for this research study. Following a review of the purpose statement, the chapter is organized in the following sections: research questions, research design, researcher's role, research setting, research participants, limitation of the study, data collection process, interview protocol, and date analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology utilized for this research study. Following a review of the purpose statement, the chapter is organized in the following sections: research questions, research design, researcher's role, research setting, research participants, limitation of the study, data collection process, interview protocol, and date analysis.

The purpose of this research was to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers, who self-identify as White, toward future Black students at a large, southeastern, Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study examined preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. This study also observed preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Research Questions

The researcher explored the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students, examined preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black, or urban, culture, and observed preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues. Research was conducted by content analysis utilizing the results of a qualitative interview process of preservice teachers at a large, southeastern, Research I university. The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

Research question one (RQ1): How do preservice teachers define race and racism?

Research question two (RQ2): What factors contribute to preservice teachers' racial perspectives?

Research question three (RQ3): What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students?

Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher was quite important due to the fact that the researcher was considered an instrument in data collection, meaning that the researcher played a significant role in the manner in which data is collected and analyzed. The researcher was considered an insider into the phenomenon which the study seeks to describe regarding race. This may have had an effect on the responses of research participants.

Furthermore, it was important to disclose the race and gender of the researcher due to the fact that, because of the nature of the topic of race, it may have inadvertently effect the responses of the research participants. The researcher was a White female. As the target population includes only White females, it was important to note that the similarity between the researcher and participant may impact the nature of the conversation, regarding willingness and comfortability in participating in the study. Individuals who did not identify as White and female were not included in this study in order to go along with research on the current population of teachers. When discussing the topic of race, it is not uncommon that members of the discussion alter their responses depending on the demographic of the researcher.

Research Setting

Interviews were conducted in-person and recorded in a quiet, neutral location where the research participants were not in danger and where the research participants feel is a private

atmosphere. No other people, other than the interviewer and the research participant, were present during the time of the interview.

<div align="center">Research Participants</div>

Research participants included three (3) people who were selected from a sample of convenience of peers over 18 years of age, who were known to the researcher as current preservice teachers enrolled in the English Language Arts Education program at a large, southeastern, Research I university. Research participants of this study self-identified as White and female. Research participants were contacted by the researcher in person to complete a ten question interview that took approximately 25 minutes.

Race and gender were a variable in the study. The researcher selected research participants who identify their race as White, and their gender as female. This was due to the fact that the sample population was representative of the contemporary preservice teacher population in order to effectively compare and comment of preservice teacher attitudes towards Black students. There were no interview questions that made the research participants unwilling or uncomfortable to participate, and that created an atmosphere that allowed them to speak freely. If the research participant was unwilling or uncomfortable, they may have chosen to decline answering questions.

The researcher interviewed three (3) research participants. Small participant research, also known as Small-N research design, is the expected norm in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Small studies with a limited number of research participants will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participant experience.

<u>Limitations of the Study</u>

This study was limited in scope. While the researcher acknowledged that the development of racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of White preservice teachers toward future Black students encompassed numerous areas, this study focused specifically on race. Although the majority of preservice teachers are also classified as middle-class and female, which was unrepresentative of the diverse student population, these factors were treated as separate issues which were examined within the context of this study due to the fact that the primary focus of this study was race. Furthermore, the researcher recognized that the "issue of race does not exist within a vacuum, but often intersects with a number of other constructs, such as gender, culture, sexual orientation, physical, mental, and emotional abilities, age, as well as economic and social class" (Kwegyir Aggrey, 2007). However, in an effort to give this study a clear focus, race was the sole focus examined here. In addition, gender specificity was a limitation within this study due to the fact that only females were included. Essentially, individuals who did not identify as White and female were not included in this study in order to go along with research on the current population of teachers.

Furthermore, this study was based on a limited number of research participants. The sample consisted of a limited number, exactly three (3), individuals who participated in the teacher education program at a four-year college located in Central Florida. Due to the nature of discussions regarding race, racism, and racial difference, research participants may have felt an array of emotions, including disinterest, which may have led to non-participation. Due to a limited number of research participants, the generalizations of this study's findings were also limited.

Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). (See Appendix A for the Letter or Approval from IRB).

Research Participant Privacy

Participation in this study and responses were kept confidential. Any reference to the research participants within the published research were by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from responses. All necessary subject identifiers from data files were removed. Data files stored electronically were encrypted on a password protected computer, which only the researcher had access to. Written notes and physical information were stored in a physically separate and secure location from the electronic data files, and associated with the data files through a key code that is also stored in a separate and secure location. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Five years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Risks to the Research Participant

There were no expected risks for participating in this study. However, some people may have become anxious or upset when answering questions about behaviors, beliefs and well-being. The following counseling information was provided in the consent form: if participants have concerns - UCF Counseling Center; http://counseling.sdes.ucf.edu/ To make an appointment: (407) 823-2811 or Email councntr@mail.ucf.edu.

Benefits to the Research Participant

There were no direct benefits to the research participant regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that they are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the Honors in the Major (HIM) thesis requirements. There was no compensation associated with participation in this study.

Data Collection

Data collection included an open-ended, one-on-one interview format of ten questions that took approximately 25 minutes. Interviews were conducted in-person and one-on-one. The nature of an interview required interpretation and analysis throughout the interview, as well as after.

Interview Questions

Interview questions were created based on prior research, an intensive literature review, and the purpose of the study. Each interview question correlated to the study's research questions, listed under the section "Research Questions". Each interview question is different, and aids in the analysis of each of the research questions, labeled as (RQ#).

Interview questions one through four were meant to gather information about the research participant's background information, including name, academic year, academic major, racial identity, hometown, and career plans. This information was significant to the study in order to make special correlations between the research participant's background information and the remaining interview responses.

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Interview question number five gathered information regarding the research participant's personal racial experiences with individuals who are racially different from themselves, as well as their feelings towards those particular experiences and how they engaged in race and racism Interview question number five correlated to (RQ1).

Interview question number six gathered information regarding the research participant's beliefs and attitudes on race and racism, as well as the factors that contributed to the research participant's racial perspectives. Furthermore, interview question number six indirectly gathered information regarding how research participants engaged in race and racism. Interview question number six correlated to (RQ1) and (RQ2).

Interview question number seven gathered information regarding the research participant's attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different. Interview question number seven correlated to (RQ3).

Interview question number eight gathered information regarding the research participant's thoughts about differences in relationships with students who are racially different from themselves. Interview question number eight correlated to (RQ3).

Interview question number nine gathered information regarding the research participant's perception of their own racial identity. Interview question correlated to (RQ3).

Interview question number ten gathered information regarding the research participant's diversity awareness, and preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. Interview question number ten correlated to (RQ2).

(See Appendix B for the Sample Interview Questions).

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was utilized for data collection and data analysis. The interview

protocol utilized for this study consisted of ten open-ended questions. The results from the

interview protocol are evaluated and summarized in Chapter Four.

The research participants remained confidential with no reference to name and institution,

but demographic data such as academic year, academic major, racial identity, description of

hometown community, and career plans were recorded by the researcher to identify emerging

themes among the research participants.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of open-ended interview questions, the research participants' often

offered varying responses. This may have caused data to become skewed, or difficult to analyze

due to the complexities offered with each response. However, the researcher preferred open-

ended interview questions, with the possibility of varying responses, rather than alternative

methods, due to the fact that the topic of race was quite complex itself. Race is a lived

experience; therefore, there was a large possibility that each research participant has a unique

response to any given interview question.

Still, the researcher collected and analyzed emerging data in this study with primary

intent of developing themes from the data. Recorded audio tapes were transcribed. (See

Appendix C for Interview Transcripts).

After initial reading and rereading of the transcribed transcripts, the researcher processed

the date through manual coding to categorize information into themes for interpretation and

analysis. This included identifying and placing emerging data, themes, and ideas into groups for use in this study. Significant data, themes, and ideas correlated directly to research questions. Furthermore, the research participant's direct words were used to illustrate significant data, themes, and ideas. Specific groups of data, themes, and ideas were developed into a descriptive narrative. The researcher interpreted and analyzed this to determine meanings and implications for preservice teachers' attitudes toward Black students, as well as the urban education system as a whole.

The following chapter will present a summary of the results of the study. The results will be presented in various categories, in which each category is explained in order to ensure that only pertinent results which are necessary for analyzing each research question are included.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study. The results were coded and divided into

three (3) categories by each of the correlating research questions (RQ#). Each category is

explained and the results are presented in order to ensure that only pertinent results which are

necessary for analyzing each research question are included.

Three (3) research participants were selected from a sample of convenience of peers over

18 years of age, who were current preservice teachers enrolled in the English Language Arts

Education program at a large, southeastern, Research I university. Research participants self-

identified as White and female. The research participants were coded under their respective

initials: E.C., O.C., and A.H.

Background of Research Participants

Interview questions one through four were meant to gather information about the research

participant's background information, including name, academic year, academic major, racial

identity, hometown, and career plans. This information was significant to the study in order to

make special correlations between the research participant's background information and the

remaining interview responses. The following information was collected about each research

participant in response to those interview questions:

Research participant E.C. was a senior enrolled in the English Language Arts Education

program at a large, Research I university. E.C. also double-majored in Psychology. E.C.

described her hometown community as White, suburban, middle-class community; however,

E.C. went to schools in the "poverty-stricken parts of town" in Jacksonville. E.C.'s community built "really good schools" in the "low income housing areas to kind of give those kids the same opportunities" and the "white kids" would be bussed into those schools. E.C. Furthermore, E.C. would like to teach at her old high school in Jacksonville due to its "rigorous curriculum." E.C. preferred to teach in a suburban area.

Research participant O.C. was a senior enrolled in the English Language Arts Education program at a large, Research I university. O.C. described her hometown community as a suburban community with a "clean-cut neighborhood with [a] harsh […] homeowner's association." She was originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and then moved to Orlando when she was three. O.C. went to a diverse high school. Furthermore, O.C. would like to teach at a high school in a suburban area.

Research participant A.H. was a senior enrolled in the English Language Arts Education program at a large, Research I university. A.H. described her hometown community as small and southern, and "pretty equally White and Black." She was also a "military kid," so, she moved around to different places throughout her life. Furthermore, E.C. preferred to teach at an urban high school in Orlando because "they need the most help." Then, she wanted to teach in a suburban area "when [she had] a family and settle[d] down."

Research Question #1 (RQ1)

Research question one (RQ1) explored how preservice teachers defined race and racism. Interview questions number five and six gathered information regarding the research participants' beliefs and attitudes on race and racism, as well as information about how research

participants engaged in race and racism. In order to determine how preservice teachers defined race and racism, the researcher coded the responses of interview questions number five and six.

In response to interview question number five, each research participant responded that yes, they have had personal experiences with those who are racially different from themselves. E.C. responded "Yes. All the time. Everywhere." E.C. also responded that those experiences "really shaped who [she was] as a person." Furthermore, E.C. responded that she learned, "we all have different backgrounds and those […] shape who we are and […] our ideals." O.C. responded that she had personal experiences with a friend who was from Egypt, and was a Muslim. O.C. also responded that she thought the experiences benefitted her and were an eye-opening experience. Furthermore, O.C. responded that she learned "it's kind of stupid to label yourself." A.H. responded that she had personal experiences in a school setting, and on her soccer team with friends that were Black. A.H. also responded that "it kind of opens your eyes to the way different people feel. And especially with things that are going on now in the media it gives you a different perspective rather than just being with one race." Furthermore, A.H. responded that she learned "to look at different points of view."

In response to interview question number six, each research participant responded negatively to race and racism. E.C. responded that she thinks "it's stupid that we are still judging people based on the color of their skin." E.C. also responded that "sometimes it gets uncomfortable" when talking about race and racism, "But, at the end of the day, it's something that needs to be talked about." Furthermore, E.C. responded that she is "not really" concerned about being politically correct, but that she is "already racially, or politically correct." O.C.

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responded that she "I hate[s] people who are racist." O.C. also responded that she felt "like it's a conversation [she has] a lot." Furthermore, O.C. responded that she is concerned about being politically correct, but that being "politically correct is just saying something in a culturally sensitive way." A.H. responded that she "grew up in a pretty Southern town, […] So, there was a lot of racism," but, that "there's not that much racial tension in my personal life." O.C. also responded that "a lot of [her] opinions are different than the popular opinion now. So, if [she is] talking with someone who is a minority […] it's a lot more pressure on me to side with them." Furthermore, A.H. responded that she feels "like it's almost always an awkward conversation, and [she would] listen rather than give my own opinion." In addition, A.H. responded that she is "pretty politically correct."

Research Question #2 (RQ2)

Research question two (RQ2) explored which factors contributed to preservice teachers' racial perspectives. Interview questions number six and ten gathered information regarding the research participants' diversity awareness, and preparedness in teaching racially diverse students. In order to determine how preservice teachers defined race and racism, the researcher coded the responses of interview questions number six and ten.

In response to interview question number six, each research participant had various responses to the factors which contributed to their racial perspectives. E.C. responded that "going to the magnet schools, [and being] a minority in [her] high school" influenced her racial perspective. O.C. responded that "going to public school […] exposed [her] to these very real situations" and diverse "points of view." O.C. also responded that her parents influenced her

racial perspective because her "parents did not come from a good situation, and […] they had [her and her] siblings when they were very young." Furthermore, O.C. responded that socio-economic factors influenced her racial perspective because her family "didn't have a lot of money." A.H. responded that her parents influenced her racial perspective because she is close with them and "whatever they believed [she] kind of believed too." A.H. also responded that the media influenced her racial perspective because "it didn't necessarily influence [her] to believe exactly what they show […] You get both sides that are very polar opposites. And so it allows you to create your own opinion."

In response to interview question number ten, each research participant responded positively in feeling prepared in effectively teaching racial diverse student populations, considering the amount of diversity awareness they have received in their undergraduate college career. Essentially, each research participant felt as though the amount of diversity awareness that they received in their undergraduate college career was sufficient in allowing them to understand diverse student populations. Therefore, their schooling experiences also influenced their racial perspectives.

Research Question #3 (RQ3)

Research question three (RQ3) explored preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students. Interview questions number seven, eight, and nine gathered information regarding the research participants' thoughts about differences in relationships with students who are racially different from themselves, as well as the research participant's perception of their own racial identity. In order to determine

preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, the researcher coded the responses of interview questions number seven, eight, and nine.

In response to interview question number seven, each research participant responded that they had little to no concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different from themselves, specifically Black students. E.C. responded that her "only concern is that, historically, they come from like, lower income like, families, and like, they usually come from more broken homes." O.C. responded that she doesn't "see" race. However, O.C. also responded that she is more "hesitant about teaching people who have bad ideas on racism, who maybe aren't racist, but are exerting racist behavior." A.H. responded that she is not concerned because "once you throw race into [it] changes you as a teacher."

In response to interview question number eight, each research participant responded that no, they do not feel that there might be any differences in their relationships with students who are racially different from themselves. E.C. responded that she would "treat them all basically the same" and that "certain students might require more assistance, but that's not based on their race, it's based on their ability." O.C. responded that it is important to "stay a professional." A.H. responded that she felt that "we're so focused on the color of skin, and I don't think it would change anything."

In response to interview question number nine, each research participant responded that yes, Black students could perceive them in certain ways because of their racial identity. E.C. responded that she thought Black students might "assume some things, especially just because [she] grew up well-off" and she might not "understand the struggles that like, they have to deal

with individually." O.C. responded that "yeah, for sure. For sure," but that "being white is one thing, but being a petite, white woman, […] relatively fashionable sometimes (laughs) um, there, there [are] a lot of conceptions." A.H. responded that "yes […] because of the way [she] look[s]" Black students might "perceive [her] as rich or […] I must have had a good childhood."

Significant data, themes, and ideas drawn from the results of this study correlated directly to three specific research questions. Furthermore, the research participant's direct words were used to illustrate significant data, themes, and ideas. Specific groups of data, themes, and ideas were developed into a descriptive narrative. The researcher interpreted and analyzed this to determine meanings and implications for preservice teachers' attitudes toward Black students, as well as the urban education system as a whole.

The following chapter will explore the conclusions that may be drawn from this research study. This chapter will outline a brief summary of the research and the design, followed by a discussion of the conclusions of the research study, educational implications, and the recommendations for future research on the topic of preservice teacher racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the conclusions that may be drawn from this research study. This chapter will outline a brief summary of the research and the design, followed by a discussion of the conclusions of the research study, educational implications, and the recommendations for future research on the topic of preservice teacher racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes.

Summary of Research

The purpose of this research was to explore the racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers, who self-identify as White, toward future Black students at a large, southeastern, Research I university through a qualitative interview process. More specifically, this study examined preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity towards Black students. This study also observed preservice teachers' ability to discuss these issues.

Using information from a 10-question qualitative interview of three (3) research participants, this thesis explored the following questions: Research question one (RQ1): How do preservice teachers define race and racism?, Research question two (RQ2): What factors contribute to preservice teachers' racial perspectives?, and Research question three (RQ3): What are preservice teachers' attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students?

Interviews were conducted in-person and one-on-one. The nature of an interview required interpretation and analysis throughout the interview, as well as after. Due to the nature of open-ended interview questions, the research participants' often offered varying responses. This may

have caused data to become skewed, or difficult to analyze due to the complexities offered with each response. However, the researcher preferred open-ended interview questions, with the possibility of varying responses, rather than alternative methods, due to the fact that the topic of race was quite complex itself. Race is a lived experience; therefore, there was a large possibility that each research participant has a unique response to any given interview question.

Significant data, themes, and ideas correlated directly to research questions. Furthermore, the research participant's direct words were used to illustrate significant data, themes, and ideas. Specific groups of data, themes, and ideas were developed into a descriptive narrative. The researcher interpreted and analyzed this to determine meanings and implications for preservice teachers' attitudes toward Black students, as well as the urban education system as a whole.

Conclusions

The findings of this study suggested that there are underlying racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes which affect White, female preservice teachers' attitudes towards Black students. Based on the results from the interview questions, the responses were somewhat varied, and there were some discrepancies between responses to different interview questions.

The researcher can conclude that the research participants in this study respond negatively to race and racism, which correlated to research question #1 (RQ1). Based on their responses, the research participants did not think that race should play a part in daily interactions whatsoever, especially in a classroom setting. They responded that they were all exposed to those who were racially different from themselves, but they did not feel as though it should be a defining characteristic for individuals. Instead, it is important to understand that every individual

has many differing ideas, experiences, and attitudes, regardless of their race. Overall, the research participants responded positively regarding how the felt about their personal experiences with race. Based on the results, the researcher can conclude that race and racism is less important to White, female preservice teachers; yet, it still plays some role in the classroom, however unintentionally.

The research participants responded that there were many different factors that helped to shape their beliefs and attitudes on race and racism, which correlated to research question #2 (RQ2). Generally, each research participant noted that their own educational experiences, specifically the schools that they attended, influenced their racial perspectives. This is a pivotal point in the study due to the fact that educational experiences have a significant impact on individuals' racial perspectives; therefore, it is important for preservice teachers to self-reflect on their own racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes in order to ensure that they do not perpetuate negativity in this regard. Still, other responses included media, family, and socio-economic status. Furthermore, the research participants responded positively in feeling prepared in effectively teaching racial diverse student populations, considering the amount of diversity awareness they have received in their undergraduate college career. Essentially, each research participant felt as though the amount of diversity awareness that they received in their undergraduate college career was sufficient in enhancing their understanding of diverse student populations. Therefore, their schooling experiences also influenced their racial perspectives. Based on the results, the researcher can conclude that there are vast and varied factors which influence White, preservice teachers' racial perspectives.

The research participants responded in various ways regarding their attitudes towards students who are racially different from themselves, specifically Black students, which correlated to research question #3 (RQ3). The research participants responded that they had little to no concerns about teaching Black students, and that they did not anticipate any differences in their relationships with Black students. However, each of the research participants did respond that yes, Black students could perceive them in certain ways because of their racial identities. This is an interesting result due to the fact that the research participants are essentially claiming that they expect no differences in their relationships with Black students, yet Black student are likely to perceive them differently due to their race. Based on these results, the researcher can conclude that White, female preservice teachers are somewhat unaware of their own racial attitudes towards Black students; however, they still expect their own racial identity to impact Black students.

Overall, the research participants were culturally sensitive to Black students. However, based on some responses, underlying racial tensions were present throughout each interview. Often times, a research participant would have attempted to describe their own sensitivity towards Black students; however, they would instead have generalized and victimized the Black student population. For example, one statement by research participant, E.C, was that "I never had to worry about like, where I was getting my, like, next meal from or anything. And I might not like, understand the struggles that like, they have to deal with individually." This grossly generalized and victimized the Black student population to say that an individual may not be able to relate to them because they always knew where their next meal was coming from. However,

poverty and hunger issues do not impact the large majority of the Black student population. Based on these results, the researcher can conclude that White, female preservice teachers sometime engage in and have stereotypic beliefs about Black students, which impacts their cultural sensitivity towards Black students.

Overall, the research participants were somewhat uncomfortable in talking about race and racism. There were many instances in which the research participants would stutter, or laugh when responding to certain interview questions, especially the ones specifically exploring race and racism. This indicated that there was a level of discomfort in discussing the issues at hand. Still, one research participant, E.C., blatantly responded that discussing race and racism made her feel uncomfortable. Based on these results, the researcher can conclude that White, female preservice teachers are somewhat uncomfortable in talking about race and racism due to the nature of the conversations.

Educational Implications

Further understanding of racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes of preservice teachers toward future Black students will increase personal and professional understandings of how race impacts the education system as a whole, as well as individual classrooms and students. The increase in racial diversity within the student population highlights the need for more effective urban education experience and diversity awareness training within preservice teacher education programs. Thus, teacher education programs that recognize the attitudes of preservice teachers towards Black students will be better able to train preservice teachers for entrance into the diverse classroom, in terms of both classroom management and teaching

Recommendations for Future Study

      This study examined racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes which affect White, female preservice teachers' attitudes towards Black students. Because this was the first time this research had been completed, extensions can be supplemented to improve the information and results. Researchers could examine a wider sample size that more accurately portrays all preservice teachers. This study showed only a small portion of what could be done when examining racial ideas, experiences, and attitudes. Researchers could expand on this study and examine a wider sample size, or, perhaps expand the inclusion criteria to include members of other races, such as Black, female preservice teachers; or, perhaps male preservice teachers.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Enrique Puig** and Co-PI: **Audra L. Greuel**

Date: **September 27, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 09/27/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Exploring Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Black Students
Investigator:	Enrique Puig
IRB Number:	SBE-16-12541
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis on 09/27/2016 12:27:09 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

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APPENDIX B: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your initials, academic year, and academic major?

2. What race do you identify with?

3. How would you describe your hometown community?

4. Please describe your career plans upon graduation.

   a. What geographic area do you plan to teach in (rural, suburban, or urban)? Please explain.

5. Have you had any personal experiences with those who are racially different from you?

   a. How do you feel about these experiences?

   b. What do you think you learned from these experiences?

6. What are your beliefs and attitudes on race and racism?

   a. What factors helped to shape these beliefs?

   b. For example, culture, politics, media, family, or socioeconomic status (education, income, wealth, employment, and occupational status)?

   c. How does talking about race and racism make you feel?

   d. Are you concerned about being "politically correct" when conversing with those who are racially different from you?

7. What are your attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different from yourself, specifically Black students?

8. Do you think there might be any differences in your relationships with students who are racially different from yourself?

9.   Do you think that Black students could perceive you in certain ways because of your

      racial identity? If so, how?

10.   Do you feel prepared in effectively teaching racially diverse student populations,

      considering the amount of diversity awareness you have received in your undergraduate

      career?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

(EC= White, female respondent #1; I= interviewer)

I: All right. Hi.

EC: (Laughs)

I: All right. What are your initials, academic year, and academic major?

EC: Um, E.C., uh, senior, and then English Language Arts education, and I also have a

psychology major.

I: Oh, cool ... Major as well, or minor?

EC: Major.

I: Oh, you're a double major?

EC: Yeah. It's stressful.

[00:00:30]

I: That's cool. Okay. So, what race do you identify with?

EC: White.

I: Okay.

EC: Good, right? (Laughs)

I: Yeah. Perfect. You're doing great.

EC: (Laughs)

I: Um, how would you describe your hometown community?

EC: Um, well, like, where I lived was very like, white, suburban-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

EC: Like, upper middle class.

I: Yeah.

EC: Uh, the schools I went to, which I mentioned in class earlier, were in like, the more like, poverty-stricken parts of town, so ...

I: What do you mean by that? Like, why-

[00:01:00]

EC: So, um, they put like, really good school in like, low income housing areas to kind of give those kids the same opportunities, and then they would basically bus like, white kids, for lack of a better term, into like, those schools, so like, people would want them to be funded. It was like, part of the desegregation after ...

I: Cool. Where was that?

EC: In Jacksonville.

[00:01:30]

I: These are just quick notes. It's really nothing. Just in case, you know ... Okay, please describe your career plans upon graduation.

EC: Um, career plans. Hopefully, find a job. I kind of want to teach at my old high school in Jacksonville, um, just because I'm used to like, the rigorous curriculum and I want to like, teach that because it makes sense for me to teach that way.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Cool ... Um, what geographic area do you plan to teach? Is it rural, suburban, or urban?

[00:02:00]

EC: Um, suburban.

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I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

EC: Modern days.

I: Yeah, so it's kind of a happy mix.

EC: Yeah.

I: Cool. Um, have you had any personal experiences with those who are racially different from you?

EC: Yes. All the time. Everywhere.

I: Okay.

EC: So ...

I: What do you mean by that?

[00:02:30]

EC: So, I like, in my classes growing up, um, teaching my students now, um, in my sorority, um, like, just on UCF campus. It's such a diverse school. Like, you kind of get to meet someone from everywhere.

I: Cool. How do you feel about these experiences?

[00:03:00]

EC: Um, I think they've really shaped who I am as a person. So like, I never get to hang out with people like, like-minded, like me. I'm always learning from a different perspective or a different culture, and you get to learn and like, try new foods that you would've never tried unless like, you had met someone from that culture before. Um, like, one of my friends since middle school is Indian, and like, he's still here for grad school at UCF, so I continually get to

hang out with him, and he tells me about like, all the Indian holidays and everything and always invites me to them.

I: Cool. That's awesome. Um, what do you think you've learned from these experiences?

[00:03:30]

EC: Uh, I think I've learned kind of what I already said, like, to look at things from like, different perspectives in a way, and just because like, I believe something doesn't mean that everyone else believes the same thing the same way, just because we all have different backgrounds and those, like, shape who we are and like, our ideals.

I: Cool ... Um, what are your beliefs and attitudes on race and racism?

EC: Uh, I mean, honestly, I think it's stupid that we are still judging people based on the color of their skin instead of by like, what they say and like, how they act ...

[00:04:00]

I: What do you mean by what they, how they act?

EC: Just because like, well, it's not even like how they act, but we just assume that they're gonna act a certain way-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

EC: Where, you know, a lot of people will just assume like, oh, like, if a white kid comes in, like, oh, they're just having a bad day, but if like, the first day of school, you know, like, an African-American student walks in, they just assume that they're gonna, they're always

like this and they're always in a bad mood and they're always trying to cause problems, where they could just be having a bad day, and like, you don't even know their situation at home.

[00:04:30]

I: Cool. Um, so, your beliefs on race and racism, what factors helped to shape those beliefs?

EC: I think going to the magnet schools, I was, I was a minority in my high school, so getting to see all these different perspectives, and like, hanging out with these people every day, like, you realize, oh, like how, you know, the media and TV and movies like, portray black people-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:05:00]

EC: Like, that's not real life. Like, it might be for a small percentage of them, but for the majority of them, they're just out here, just like every single other kind of person.

I: Yeah ... Um, and then I have, for example, like, how the culture, politics, media, family, and socio-economic status, like, how those things shaped your beliefs.

EC: Um-

I: Do you think that one was more, like, impactful on you? Like, maybe your culture, media, or family-

EC: I think-

[00:05:30]

I: Or just where you grew up in general?

EC: I think my family kind of did since, even though I'm white, like, my mom wasn't

born in this country, so I could definitely relate to people who are like, foreigners because like,

I'm, you know, half not American. So, it's like, interesting that my mom raised me to like, respect

everyone, and like, she came from such a diverse country that she learned to respect everyone.

So, you just kind of, you respect the person instead of like, judging them based on like, what they

look like or anything ...

[00:06:00]

I: Cool. Um, how does talking about race and racism make you feel?

EC: Um, I feel like sometimes it gets uncomfortable.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

EC: But, at the end of the day, it's something that needs to be talked about, so, I

already told you that I think it's stupid that we still have to discuss this issue- you know, 60 years

after the fact that, you know, Martin Luther King was here.

[00:06:30]

I: Yeah ... Are you concerned about being politically correct when conversing with

those who are racially different with you?

EC: Um, not really, but I think I, I mentally am already racially, or politically correct,

that I don't need to worry about saying the wrong word. Like, I would never call someone a word

that I wouldn't want to be called, so ...

[00:07:00]

I: Yeah. Cool. Um, what are your attitudes and concerns about teaching future

students who may be racially different from yourself? So, what are your attitudes and concerns

about teaching, like, specifically black students, if you have any?

EC: Um, I think my only concern is that, historically, they come from like, lower

income like, families, and like, they usually come from more broken homes-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:07:30]

EC: So, it's kind of like, keeping that in mind, that they might have a different past that

I'm not, I don't understand because like, like, my parents are still together, you know, 20

something years later. Meanwhile, like, they might never have met their dad or something like

that.

I: Do you think there might be any differences in your relationships with students

who are racially different from yourself?

[00:08:00]

EC: Uh, I'm gonna say, no, honestly because even in my classroom that I'm in now,

like, I treat them all basically the same. Sometimes like, certain students might require more

assistance, but that's not based on their race, it's based on their ability.

I: Yeah.

EC: So, if I need to stand next to a kid, I don't care if they're white, black, yellow, tan,

grey, like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna help them as much as they need help, until like, they get their

assignment done.

[00:08:30]

I: Do you think that black students could perceive you in certain ways because of your racial identity?

EC: Um, I mean, I'm sure they assume some things, especially just because, you know, I, I grew up well-off. Like, I never had to worry about like, where I was getting my, like, next meal from or anything. And I might not like, understand the struggles that like, they have to deal with individually, but I don't think that's based off race, I think that's based off like, it's like, family situations, socio-economic situation.

[00:09:00]

I: Yeah ...

I: All right. Last one. Do you feel prepared in effectively teaching racially diverse student populations, considering the amount of diversity awareness you have received in your undergraduate career?

EC: Yes.

[00:09:30]

I: Okay.

EC: In like, shorthand.

I: All right. What do you mean by that?

EC: I just feel like-

I: Like, what's the diversity awareness to you, that you've received?

EC: I think it's just like, we're taught to like, respect that everyone has a different like, background-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:10:00]

EC: And a different past, but also that everyone has different needs, either based off of that, or based off like, where they've come from, like, in previous classes. So, like, we're always taught, like, you know, even though we might teach one lesson plan, there might be like, 10 different scaffolding things that go on because, you know, like, this student might not be at like, the reading level that they need to be, but this student may be like, above the reading level, so you know how to like, individualize everything for the students.

(OC= White, female respondent #2; I= interviewer)

I: All right. Hi (laughter). All right. So, what are your initials, academic year, and academic major?

OC: So, my initials or O.S.C. I'm guessing those are the initials you were referring to?

I: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: Um, my academic-

I: Year.

OC: Year, which is 2013.

I: Okay. Okay, basically, you're a senior?

OC: Yeah. And then, English ed.

I: Cool. All right. What race do you identify with?

[00:00:30]

OC: Um, I'm white, obviously.

I: Okay.

OC: That's what I put down for everything, but I guess in terms of culture, uh, I know like, Italian is always subset under white, but sometimes I, when people ask me like, what I am, I'm like, oh, I'm Italian.

I: Right.

OC: It's, it's kind of different. Well, it's for sure different then basic Caucasian.

I: Well, it's like your ethnicity-

OC: Yeah, yeah.

I: Is Italian.

OC: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

I: Where your family's from, but you're white.

OC: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

I: Okay. Um, how would you describe your hometown community?

[00:01:00]

OC: Um, okay, well, I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and there, it's very like, everyone's in the same cycle. You know, people don't go to college. People don't, you know, grow up, you know? They just, it's the same cycle of bad situations. But I consider myself a native to Orlando because I've lived here since I was like, three. And I've seen the difference, like, going back and forth because here in Orlando, people- and I think it's because it's a high immigrant, um, city- like, there's so much more like, I'm gonna push forward. I'm gonna move forward. It's not, the question's not, are you gonna go to college, it's what college are you gonna go to?

[00:01:30]

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: You know, so there's a big difference.

I: Yeah.

OC: Yeah.

I: Definitely. Is it, um, like, rural, suburban, like, where you actually like, went to school and stuff like that.

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[00:02:00]

OC: Uh, suburban, for sure. It's, it's, um, it's a very like, clean-cut neighborhood with really harsh like, um, homeowner's association, uh, but actually, the high school I went to was incredibly diverse, and I know we won like, awards for like, the way that diversity was like, incorporated. I know that sounds like, really weird, like to be like, oh, our diversity, but it was, just because of like, the way, the place it was located at.

I: Yeah. Cool. Um, please describe your career plans upon graduation.

[00:02:30]

OC: So, um, I'm gonna be a high school teacher for a little bit. I'm planning on starting my, to get my Masters in teaching instruction and curriculum development because I want to be a professor. Like, that's always been the goal, but I got a little scared when I got into college, so then I thought, okay, maybe I'll stay a teacher, and then I realized there was no flexibility with sticking to just my Bachelors, and by getting a Masters, I would then have the flexibility to become a program manager, a professor.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:03:00]

OC: Um, I haven't decided if I'm gonna go the doctoral route. There's just a- there's definitely like, you have to be realistic about numbers, but I'm at a place where I can make sense of getting my Masters, and I know it's not something I'm gonna regret and I can afford, so just going to get- getting my Masters and becoming a professor, and then I would like to like, I think

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I'd like to like, write a book. Maybe like a study guide or a textbook or something like that. I don't know. Just like working, creating curriculum.

I: Cool. Um, what geographic area do you plan to teach in? Rural, suburban, or urban?

[00:03:30]

OC: Um, probably suburban. I have, I feel really bad about it, I have no heart for living in the city, and I have no heart for living in the country. Um, yeah. I, I love the suburbs, and it's, it's not necessarily like ... Yes, the people are one thing, but I just think like, rural is too slow for me, city is too fast for me.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: So, yeah.

[00:04:00]

I: Um, have you had any personal experiences with those who are racially different from you?

[00:04:30]

OC: Yeah. Um, growing up, my best friend was- her parents from Egypt. She's Muslim, and that was different, you know, to, to learn about her culture and stuff like that. But now, like, even though we're not close friends anymore, like, I'm very like, sensitive to people who are Islamophobic or very like, you know, always very open to explaining, uh, Abrahamic religions and whatnot. Because I, I think, I think it's- her religion solidified my own. I'm a

Christian. And like, just like, understanding her culture, like, I was like, oh my gosh, I have so much wrong.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:05:00]

OC: And, um, and I think that changed like, the way even I approached teaching because there's like so many times like I see kids, and I'm like, I don't understand what you're doing. Like, one of the kids in my internship, like, he is very, very strictly, um, very deeply Muslim, and he won't make eye contact with anyone. And at first, I was like, oh, weird, but then I realized like, that's okay, like you know?

I: Right.

OC: So, I think, I think that opened me up to being more sensitive and understanding.

I: Yeah.

OC: Yeah.

I: Um, how do you feel about these experiences?

OC: I think they've benefited me way- they, I don't think they've ever like, put me down. I think, actually, I lie. I think that it was eye-opening to then see what was wrong, you know?

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:05:30]

OC: With people in my own family, um, the way people treated each other. By like, getting to understand like, her culture, I was like, wow, like, there's a lot we're really saying

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wrong over here. So, I think, um, even, even though someone might not agree with her culture, there's still a point of respect.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:06:00]

OC: And I think that's what I noticed. Like, the lack of respect or sensitivity, like, everywhere. And I think it's gotten better, like, with social media, people having these conversations face to face. I think, especially this election has brought out a lot of that, so ...

I: Yeah, a lot of those issues.

OC: Yeah.

I: Definitely. Um, what do you think you learned from these experiences? I know you kind of touched on that, but ...

OC: Um, I'm really trying to think of like, a really good answer. I think I learned, I, uh, I've always been a Republican, which is super funny, like, in terms of ideals, but I think I learned that it's kind of stupid to label yourself.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:06:30]

OC: Um, yeah. Like, I think, I think it's stupid. Like, you can be a Christian. You can be a Republican. You can be white and stuff like that, but it's stupid to say that those things define you completely, and then isolate yourself from all these other experiences and people.

[00:07:00]

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What are your beliefs and attitudes on race and racism?

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OC: Um, oh (laughs) I hate people who are racist, and I'm very like ... I, I say that, but I, I don't, like, that's not the way I exercise it, though. I believe, like, punish the behavior and not the person. So like, when my dad, he makes the mistake all the time because he thinks he's joking, he'll say something that's like, mean. And I'm like, dad, you can't say that. I'm like, you're a good person, but what you're saying isn't okay. And even like, I was in the classroom one time- this isn't racist, this is more sexist- and I had a student like, say to me, basically that he didn't feel like he could have intellectual conversations with me because I was a woman. And I was like, oh my god, I'm gonna like, freak out, and I just had to turn around and be like, let me explain to you what you're saying, why you're saying it, and how- and once he realized how I perceived it, he was like, no, no, no, and I was like ... You know, because I don't think, especially kids, they don't understand the impact of their words.

I: Yeah, it's hard.

[00:08:00]

OC: But it's, I think it's harder when you're so passionate about like, oh, don't hurt people, because you know, I think being in education, you have to be like, you have to have some form of like, nurturing, and so you never want anyone to be hurt. You never want anyone to be disrespected. So, it's really hard when you get like, mad about it, and you have to just sit back and be like, I'm not gonna punish you as a person, I have to punish the behavior.

I: Right.

OC: You know, because if you punish the person, then no one's winning, you know?

I: Yeah.

OC: No one's gonna heal.

I: Yeah. It's pretty much, those types of beliefs are sometimes built in there.

[00:08:30]

OC: Yeah.

I: You know? So, it's hard. Um, so, what factors helped shape these beliefs?

 [00:09:00]

OC: Um, I think going to public school. I think, um, because I have a lot of friends and I grew up in a community where a lot of people went to a Christian school or a private school. Um, and I was always the public school kid. And I think that worked out in my benefit, because I was exposed to these very real situations, and very like, diverse, um, points of view. And I also think my parents, because my parents did not come from a good situation, and my parents are not like ... My parents are very much like, growing up as we grow. My parents, like, they had me and my siblings when they were very young, and so, our house is very democratic in the sense that, um, we talk about things very in depth, and it feels like fixing like, a cycle.

[00:09:30]   Because at one point, like, in bad-cycled families, there has to be a break. There has to be a point where we're not doing this anymore. We're not gonna continue this bad mindset and these bad behaviors. And so, I think my parents, taking us away from Philadelphia and taking us away from that cycle, like, really changed like, how I think about people. Because I have people in my family who I'm like, you guys are idiots, but I have to respect them and I

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have to try to tell them, what you're saying is just a cycle of hate that you've been taught. You know, that's Philadelphia though (laughs)

I: Yeah.

[00:10:00]

OC: So, I think, moving down here, and once again, because Orlando's so special in the sense that it is so diverse, and just being exposed to a place where soccer is something that's really big or that, you know, you can go to school with people who, uh, wear hijabs and whatnot. Yeah, I think that was a big difference.

I: Any other things? Culture, politics, media, family, socio-economic status, that you think might have ...

[00:10:30]

OC: Affected my beliefs?

I: Affected your beliefs on like, race and racism?

[00:11:00]

OC: Um, I think socio-economic. I think that because when I was younger, we, my family had like, a lot more money. My, my dad had, was doing great. He works in timeshare. And then, you know, the recession hit, hurricanes hit, and so, once again I grew up a lot, around a lot of very rich, very white, very Christian families who went to private school. And I was a public school kid who didn't have a lot of money, and it was okay. Like, I was never ashamed about that, but I could, I could understand- it changed my beliefs on people because I could understand those who were in that situation longer than I was, you know? And I could, I, I

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understood that they were people and that they weren't defined by what was happening to them, you know?

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: And I think, I think you, people think things are bad, and then once, and- how am I trying to say this? People think things are bad just because they know there are things in life that are supposed to be bad, and then the real bad comes-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: They're like, whoa.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:11:30]

OC: So, that's why I think there are some people who can handle things and some people who cannot.

I: Right.

OC: Yeah.

I: Yeah. Um, how does talking about race and racism make you feel?

[00:12:00]

OC: Um, I feel like it's a conversation I have a lot. Like, I was just talking to a teacher I worked with. Uh, she, today, posed the conversation to her students in like a Socratic seminar, of do words matter? And, uh, one of our former students, because I tutored with her, she like, spoke up, because she has a very thick accent, and she cried in the class and other kids were crying because they don't understand. And so like, it's a conversation we have a lot, like me,

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among other teachers, because kids are not necessarily imma- well, they are immature, in some

capacity, but they're also at a point where they don't, they don't understand what they're doing to

each other. And so, I think I had the conversation a lot of times, as a facilitator, as opposed to

like, recognizing like, myself and how I'm interacting and trying like, not to be racist. Not to be

racist. I am not racist (laughs) but like, being sensitive to what I'm doing.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:12:30]

OC: You know, I think a majority of the time, I'm like, oh, okay, I have a clean card.

Um, I know I'm not racist, but there are points where I'm like, am I, am I still underlying like,

doing things that I'm not even realizing? Because the majority of the time, the way, when I talk

about racism, it's as a facilitator. So, like, when I'm talking to you about it, I just feel like, okay,

well, here's what we talk about all the time, you know?

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's more self-reflective.

OC: Yeah.

[00:13:00]

I: Cool ... Um, are you concerned about being politically correct when conversing

with those who are racially different from you?

OC: Um, yeah. For sure, actually. My, um ... And it's something that, because of

friendships and stuff like that, I've had to be sensitive to, because- and it's a good thing to

practice, I think-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: Being because I don't think politically correct means necessarily not saying something.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: I think politically correct is just saying something in a culturally sensitive way.

I: Yeah.

[00:13:30]

[00:14:00]

OC: And, um, growing up, I had one friend who was Muslim and I had another friend who was a lesbian. We were three best friends, so I, I was very careful with like, the way I would say things. And a lot of the times, we, we so much like, define people by these characteristics. Like my friend who's a lesbian, a lot of people will be like, oh, she's a lesbian, right? And I'm just like, it's not her defining characteristic, you know? It doesn't, uh, it doesn't, I guess, come up as much, but I particularly think that I'm really like, sensitive, and then that also reflects the people I'm talking to who are the same race as me, you know, like when I talk to my father, when I talk to, um, my friends. And I make sure that I'm still using-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: Sensitive language, because I think it's something that we should actively be doing. I think we should acknowledge, you know, when people aren't saying the right thing, and be like, okay, well, this is what you're saying, this is how it's being perceived, this is a better way to say it. I think, I think education is the answer to everything, honestly. I don't think it's something we should ignore, but I think it's something that we should actively model.

[00:14:30]

I: Cool.

OC: Yeah.

I: Um, what are your attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different from yourself, specifically black students?

[00:15:00]

OC: Um, I don't think I have concerns, like, with teaching people who are a different race than me because I just ... I don't mean to say this to make myself sound good, I just don't see it. I, one of the first places I worked at, uh, was primarily had black students, and one- like, I just assumed, you know, they all had similar backgrounds to me, and then I found out towards the end of the year, one of them was homeless, and I was like, whoa, why'd I not know this, you know? Are you okay? And, um, I think maybe I should be more sensitive to different people's races. Not their races, their- well, yes, I should be sensitive to their races because each race comes with their own set of stereotypes, so I think it's important to be sensitive to those and make sure those aren't being exercised in your classroom.

[00:15:30]

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: Um, but I think I'm more so hesitant about teaching people who have bad ideas on racism, who maybe aren't racist, but are exerting racist behavior. That's what I'm scared of

because it's like, oh my gosh, like, I have to change this and punish the behavior and not the child, and sometimes that's not easy, you know?

I: Yeah.

[00:16:00]

OC: That's, that's, I'm more scared of that than thinking I'm gonna stereotype a kid.

I: Right.

OC: Yeah.

I: Um, do you think there might be any differences with students who are racially different from yourself?

OC: Could you say that one more time?

I: Do you think there might be any differences in your relationships with students who are racially different from yourself? Versus like ... Like, someone who identifies as white, maybe.

[00:16:30]

OC: Um, I think that I'm somebody who takes the teaching profession- I think it's so important to stay a professional-

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: Throughout because so many teachers get too comfortable, and then that's where you are risking the child's safety, in the sense that, um, you know, they think it's okay to text you or you think it's okay to give them your number. So, I, I've seen it happen, where teachers become less professional.

I:	Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:17:00]

OC:	And so, I don't think I would necessarily be actively sharing like, you know, um, aspects of my life that are affected by the fact that I'm white. Like, you know, I'm white, so, I'm Christian, so, I probably celebrate Christmas, you know?

I:	Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC:	I don't think I would necessarily be sharing those actively, and so I don't, I don't think it's a conversation. I don't think it's a sense where I would be like, oh man, I'm closer to these kids because we have similar experiences because I believe in the idea of being a neutral professional-

I:	Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC:	So heavily. Um, I don't think it'd be a problem, but in terms of like- I mean, I might be able to like, when I'm reading something, connect to someone's piece more than another-

I:	Right.

[00:17:30]

OC:	But I think I'm aware enough of stereotypes to not let that affect my work.

I:	Cool.

OC:	Yeah.

I:	Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, do you think that black students could perceive you in certain ways because of your racial identity?

[00:18:00]

OC: Yeah, for sure. For sure. Um, and I've had this in the past because, like I said, I've worked at a highly- a school with a lot of black students. Um, it's not- I think being white is one thing, but being a petite, white woman, where, um, you know, relatively fashionable sometimes (laughs) um, there, there is a lot of conceptions of, you know, she's a bitch, or she's, um, gonna be hard on you, or she, you know, that there's definitely like flirtations that come your way that are weird-

I: Yeah.

[00:18:30]

OC: And you're like, whoa, no, no, no, you're a child. But, um, and to ignore those, and to say that they're not there is a problem. You have to acknowledge that a student is doing that, but you have to respond to it in the most appropriate way, because normally they're doing that because of immaturity, or they're doing that because of their own insecurity, and, um, you know, I've learned a couple tricks, like, wear heels when you want people to take you seriously, or make sure to give a smile once in a while because I, a lot of the times, like children will see a white woman who's pretty, and they just assume, bitch.

[00:19:00]

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: And, and you don't want that. You want to be perceptible, you know, you want people to think that they can talk to you. And so sometimes I just try to, I try to make everyone- like, I'm really big about building classroom community, in the sense that … Just like in the

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sense that like, when I talk to people, I'm like, turn on your Italian. So like, um, I don't know what I was saying. I was basically just saying that-

I: No, but I know what you were saying.

OC: Yeah.

I: You were saying you didn't want the way that they're perceiving you to be correct, and you want to give a smile or-

OC: Yeah.

I: Wear heels to take you seriously so they don't think they can maybe walk all over you, and things like that.

OC: Yeah.

[00:20:00]

I: But that's okay. You did a great job with that question. Okay, um, last one. Do you feel prepared in effectively teaching a racially diverse student population, considering the amount of diversity awareness you have received in your undergraduate career?

[00:20:30]

OC: Yes. I can answer that question with a yes because, number one thing I think about when we're talking about this whole conversation, I don't know what class it was, it was definitely here at UCF, we watched a video, um, and in this video, it might have been Dr. Hood's class, I don't know. Um, this lady was talking about how, uh, she, she's from Africa, and she was reading something, and she was like, oh, this is the most beautiful writing. It was about this boy in the winter and he found an apple or something, and she realized, like, this isn't the only

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writing in the world. Like, I have no connection to the boy in the winter eating an apple. She's like, I'm from Africa, you know? And so she started writing stuff that was reflective of different places and, and cultures and like, and that really hit home with me because I was like, wow. I was like, when's the last time you wrote a book about, you know, or saw something culturally beautiful about someone, you know, in South America or Africa.

[00:21:00]

[00:21:30]   And so I think it's important, especially with text sets and, um, text pairings, to choose books that are representative of not just one culture, you know? And I say that in the sense, like, don't choose all books that are Hispanic influenced. Don't choose all books that are black influenced. Don't choose all books that are white influenced. Sample and pair, and be like, okay, this is in this person' point of view for what purpose? I don't think, I don't think there's a point to say, oh, everything's about white people, everything's about Hispanic people. No. I think it's important to be sensitive to the fact that you're allowing tons of perspectives. Because your classroom's diverse, your curriculum should be diverse.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

OC: You know?

I: Yeah.

OC: And I think, I think UCF's undergrad has done a really good job at saying, hey, students come with different experiences. That's something you hear in every class. You've got to activate their prior knowledge and, you know, do stuff that makes text connect to them in some way.

I: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

(AH= White, female respondent #3; I= interviewer)

I: All right, what are your initials, academic year, and academic major?

AH: Um, A.K.H. Academic Year, so when I graduate? So, I'm a senior. And English

Language Arts education.

I: Cool. What race do you identify with?

AH: White.

I: Um, how would you describe your hometown community?

[00:00:30]

AH: Um, small, southern, a pretty good mixture of races but mostly white and black.

Not much other ... diverse races than that.

I: Cool. Um, please describe your career plans upon graduation.

[00:01:00]

AH: Um, I want to teach here in Orlando for a few years while I get my Masters.

Preferably high school. And I would like to teach in like a lower income school. Not necessarily

an A or B school.

I: Like Title I?

AH: Yeah.

I: Um, what geographic area do you plan to teach in: Rural, Suburban, or Urban?

AH: Urban.

I: Cool. Please explain...

[00:01:30]

AH: Um, well at least while I'm young I'd like to work in Urban schools because I feel like they need the most help. But, probably when I have a family and settle down I will want to live in a Suburban area, so I'll probably end up teaching in a Suburban area.

I: Have you had any personal experiences with those who are racially different from you?

AH: Yes. So, just like friendships and stuff? Is that what you mean?

I: Yes. Do you want to describe those?

[00:02:00]

AH: Um, well most ... in my high school I feel like it was pretty equally white and black. So, I was on the soccer team and I had a really good friends on the soccer team that were black. Um, my dad's best friend is also black, so he's I pretty much consider him my uncle. But, I mean, for the most part it's just school where I feel like I've met most people.

I: How do you feel about these experiences?

[00:02:30]

AH: Um...Good, I guess? I feel like it kind of opens your eyes to the way different people feel. And especially with things that are going on now in the media it gives you a different perspective rather than just being with one race.

I: What do you think you've learned from these experiences?

[00:03:00]

AH: To look at different points of view. Because, a lot of my friends will have different points of view, whether it's politically or education wise. And because we're friends

we're able to talk and not just continue to argue and then like they'll they will make good points but then they will also take my points in, so.

I: Um, what are your beliefs and attitudes on race and racism?

AH: What do you mean?

I: Um, like, how do you feel about like race in general or racism? Could, like, relate to what's going on now. Could relate to how you grew up and things like that?

AH: Yeah.

I: How your parents instilled those beliefs in you.

[00:04:00]

AH: Um, well I grew up in a pretty Southern town, like I said. So, there was a lot of racism. Um, I mean there was confederate flags places. There's still confederate flags places, but I feel like that was just like more of a learning experience cause my parents were not at all like that. And my ... my parents, my dad grew up in New Orleans, my mom grew up in Montgomery. Which are also very racial areas, I feel like, between white and black. And um, like I feel like now, I think things have gotten a lot better between races. Obviously, in different areas there's a lot that still goes on. But, for the most part I feel like what I've seen is there's not that much racial tension in my personal life.

I: Good. Um, what factors help to shape your beliefs?

[00:04:30]

AH: Um, I was also...like, I was a military kid. So, I think moving around and getting different experiences and growing up in different places and meeting different people definitely

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helped. Um, and then my parents...I'm really close with my parents and whatever they believed I

kind of believed too. But they also pushed me like, to defend what I believe, so sometimes it was

frustrating too. Because they would always be the devil's advocate, so that I was like firm in my

beliefs in case anybody ever questioned me on them.

[00:05:00]

I: Maybe culture, politics, media, family, or socio-economic status. Did any of these

have an impact on your racial beliefs?

[00:05:30]

AH: Um, family. Culture? Um, I don't not so much culture, probably the media. Just

because, um, I feel like it didn't necessarily influence me to believe exactly what they show. I

think it is pretty telling. You get both sides that are very polar opposites. And so it allows you to

create your own opinion.

I: Cool. Um, how does talking about race and racism make you feel?

AH: It depends on who I'm with, honestly.

I: Okay.

[00:06:00]

AH: Um, a lot of my opinions are different than the popular opinion now. So, if I'm

talking with someone who is a minority, I feel like it's a lot more pressure on me to side with

them. And then I also kind of feel guilty if I want to say I've experienced racism, cause it's

almost like because I'm white that's not possible for me to have experienced racism. So, I feel

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like it's almost always an awkward conversation, and I just mostly listen rather than give my own opinion.

I: Are you concerned about being politically correct when conversing with those who are racially different?

[00:06:30]

AH: Yes. If I'm more familiar, if we're friends no. But, if it's just casual conversation, or if they overhear me say something and they chime in then yeah, I'm pretty politically correct.

I: Um, what are your attitudes and concerns about teaching future students who may be racially different than yourself. Specifically, black students.

[00:07:00]

AH: Um, I'm not really concerned about it. Because I just feel like once you throw race into...um, I just feel like that changes you as a teacher. I'm gonna be open and I want them to, you know, have texts that are racially diverse, and I want them to experience racially diverse um, experiences in my class. Whether it's my assignments or my group activities, or whatever. But, I'm not...I'm more so just...how I would teach any student. Like, I'm not worried about, "Oh, I have five black students. I have to make sure I hit on these different things." Like, whatever student I have they will, even if I have an entirely white classroom they're gonna get black authors, Hispanic authors, Native American authors. Because I feel like that's what encompasses literature.

[00:07:30]

I:	Um, do you think that there might be any differences in your relationships with students who are racially different than yourself?

AH:	No. Not...I don't I don't think so, no. Just because I feel like I would be just as understanding. No mat...I just feel like if we're so focused on the color of skin, and I don't think it would change anything.

[00:08:00]

I:	Do you think that black students could perceive you in certain ways because of your racial identity?

AH:	Yes. Because, um, a lot of um, I guess even with people that I know now, just because of the way I look, perceive me as rich or I must be...I must have had a good childhood or whatever the case is just because whether it is the way I talk, the way I dress. So, I'm sure students from middle school to high school are going to think the same thing.

[00:08:30]

I:	Do you feel prepared in effectively teaching a racially student population, considering the amount of diversity awareness you have received in your undergrad career?

AH:	Yes. Um, I was really involved my first couple years. So, and we did so much diversity training and so many seminars and stuff to be aware of who we talk to and how we say what we say. And also my job now, I work with mostly black men, so I feel like I would be prepared to work with a diverse classroom.